The Lepchas of Darjeeling District

● BULLETIN OF THE CULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

SPECIAL SERIES NO. 2

.8954
26L

EDITORIAL BOARD

DURGADAS MAJUMDAR
Director, Tribal welfare,
& Cultural Research Institute.

ANADI CHARAN BANERJEE
Assistant Secretary,
Tribal welfare.

AMAL KUMAR DAS
Deputy Director,
Cultural Research Institute.

HEMENDRA NATH BANERJEE
Chief Instructor cum Superintendent,
Social workers' Training Institute.

MINENDRA NATH BASU
Reader,
Department of Anthropology,
University of Calcutta.

THE Lepchas OF
DARJEELING DISTRICT

AMAL KUMAR DAS,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

and

SWAPAN KUMAR BANERJEE,
STATISTICAL ASSISTANT

1602

SPECIAL SERIES NO. 2, 1962

308.8954
DAS

Cover Design and Photographs by
DIBYENDU CHAKI

305.8954
D26L

3001

Published by Sri D. Majumdar, Director of Tribal Welfare on behalf of the Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal and printed by M. K. Mukerjee, at Temple Press, 2, Nayaratna Lane, Calcutta-4.

CONTENTS

PAGES

CHAPTER 1: LAND AND PEOPLE 1—11

Land and environment, Origin of the name—Lepcha, Physical features, Character structure, Language, People and their migration, Early history.

CHAPTER 2: MATERIAL CULTURE 12—37

Settlement pattern, Land and land holding, House, construction of house, Agriculture, Horticulture, Herbal plants, Fishing, Hunting, Gathering, Animal Husbandry, Domestic Utensils, Weapons, Food and drinks, Care and decoration of the body, Dress and ornaments, Travel and transport, Arts and Crafts, Musical instruments, Daily life.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC SYSTEM 38—42

Economic system, Division of labour in different economic activities, Economic consciousness of the people.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY OF SINDIPONG 43—70

Introduction: Location, Village, History of settlement, Climate, Land, Agricultural enterprises, Population, Schools, Post Office and market, Woshipping place, Co-operative society. *Study on the Lepchas of Sindipong*: Demography, Age and Sex, Family by type and size, Martial status, Association of clan and marriage, Death rate, Birth rate, Nett reproductive index, Reproductive events, First-last birth interval, Birth intervals, Educational standards, Land, Labour and working force, Primary and secondary occupation and their association, Shift in occupation, Employment, Income and expenditure.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND PRACTICES ... 71—104

Clan, Family, Kinship, *Marriage*: local version, form, type, arrangement and consent, regulation, consideration, marital residences, commensality, sexual relations and restrictions, divorce, time and priest, ritualistic performances, cost, premarital sexual relations, *Life Cycle*: Pregnancy, child birth and name giving, sleeping arrangement, nursing and weaning, seperation of child from mother, initiation ordeals, authority and discipline, succession to father's office, inheritance of property, Death and rites, causes of death, conception of Soul, burial or cremation, procession, rites before and after cremation or burial, period of pollution and restriction, purification rites, accidental, child and maternal deaths.

CHAPTER 6: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ... ... 105—119

Religious beliefs, Relationship between different religious groups, Buddhist festivities and the connected rites, 'Gumpha' festivals, Animistic festivals, Magico-religious rites, 'Gumpha' or monastery, Lama, 'Bonthing', 'Mon', A festive day with Lepchas, Lepcha calendar, 12-year cycle, stars.

CHAPTER 7: DANCE, MUSIC, TALES AND PROVERBS ... ... 120—137

Dance: after nature, agricultural, war, historical, mysticism, mythological. *Folk songs, Legends and myths*: creation of earth, creation of man, origin of Lepchas, origin of 'Bonthing', lunar eclipse, way to reach heaven, the sun, bird and rat, two brothers, wild boar and tiger, sambur and monkey, monkey and stork, orphan boy, 'Gaebu Achok', Superstition and proverb, origin of the names of a few places, Mother's lullaby.

CHAPTER 8: HEALTH, EDUCATION AND RECREATION ... ... 138—145

Health: Steps taken to restrict the diseases, role of quacks, mortality, attitude of the people, Education, Recreation.

CHAPTER 9: POLITICAL SYSTEM ... 146—147

CHAPTER 10: DYNAMICS OF THE SOCIETY 148—160

Impact of modernization, opinion and attitude towards various welfare measures, knowledge of awareness of the welfare schemes, opinions, attitude of the people, exchange of ideas and thoughts, hamlets and ethnic composition, knowledge of hamlet, village etc., feelings, assemblage, participation, fairs and festivals, co-operation, day-to-day meeting, weekly market, range of movement, knowledge of outside world, dissemination of new ideas, accounts of Lepcha priests.

CHAPTER 11: WELFARE ORGANISATION ... 161—164

The Lepcha Association.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUDING REMARKS ... 165—166

BIBLIOGRAPHY ... ... 167—168

INTRODUCTION

The Lepchas are a Scheduled Tribe Community of the State of West Bengal inhabiting the hilly regions of Darjeeling district. Ethnographic and socio-economic information regarding these people are very meagre. In view of this paucity of scientific data about them and also because of the added importance of the area due to recent political trends in the region, the Cultural Research Institute of the State of West Bengal considered it worth while to take up a short-term study on them. This study on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the life of the Lepchas was undertaken by the Institute in 1961 in a few villages of Darjeeling district.

It is very difficult to study all the aspects of a community in details within a short period, as the social and economic systems differ to a considerable extent among different sections and levels of the community. To cover thoroughly the vast field of their social, economic, and religious systems and also their folklores, arts and crafts etc., one has to work at all these levels. The objective of this study was chiefly confined to the community at its present level of development, embracing all the aspects in short mainly with a descriptive approach in an informative way so that the study may be helpful to the administrators, social workers etc., although the analytical aspect of the study has not altogether been neglected.

Economic and social changes are continually taking place as a result of the dynamic forces operating in the country and within the community itself. Some of these changes are generated within the structure of the folk society and also from some exogenous forces which in turn are affecting the internal structure and functioning of the system. One of our aims was to study these forces of change and to examine the community in its structure and functioning against the background of these forces.

The most important initial problem tackled was the designing of sample selected for the survey and methods adopted for this study. For the purpose of designing the sample, the following characteristics were considered:

(a) Lepcha concentrated villages which must have at least 50 Lepcha families together with some families of other communities.

(b) Villages must be subjected to some forces of change, such as:

(I). Community Development Projects and/or National Extension Service, (II) Political, Religious and Social Service Organisations, (III) New irrigation Projects, (Iv) New roads. transportation and communication facilities, (v) urban industrial development, (vi) construction and public works undertakings, (vii) organisation of new marketing centres, etc.

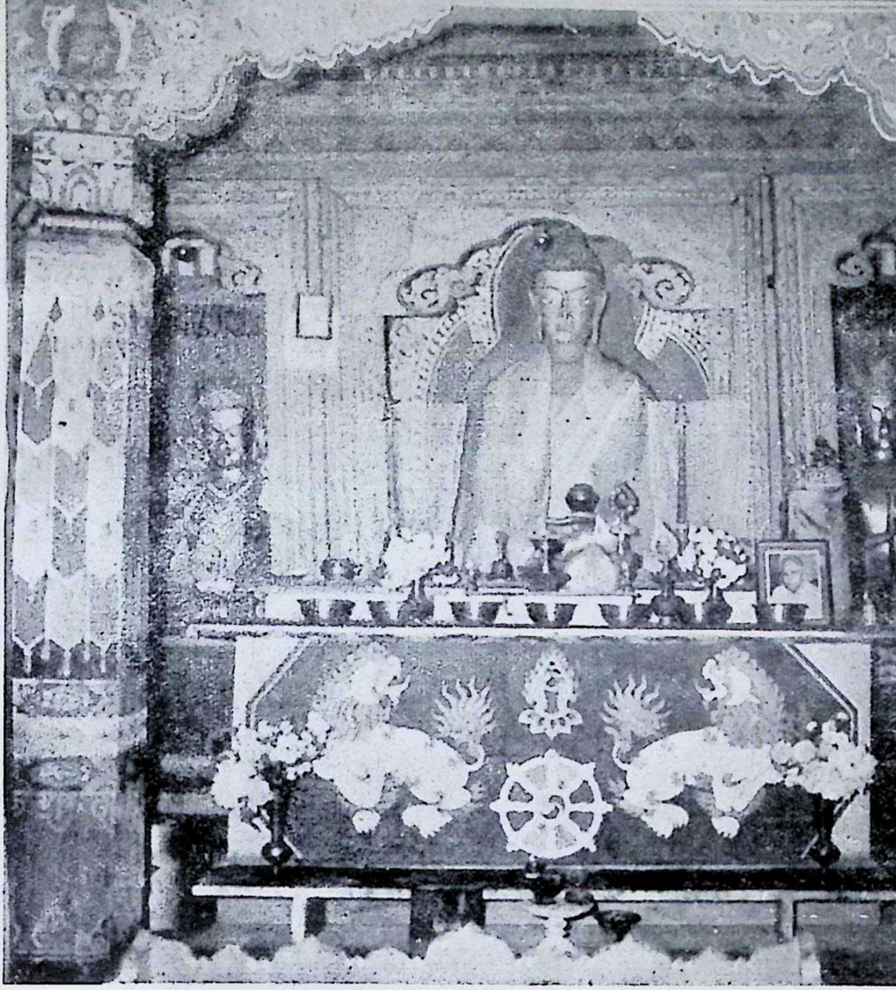
(c) Two types of villages were considered:—(i) One close to the urban areas with chances of easy access of urban ideas to those villages and (ii) the other far away from urban areas. The present study was mainly concerned with the sample villages of first type. The study of the later type of villages has been kept off for the future not only for their individual characteristics but also for comparative study which may throw light on their structure, functioning and process of changes.

From the characteristics mentioned above, one village was selected for the economic study and a number of villagers from a number of villages were contacted to get information on their socio-cultural life. The village 'Sindipong' was selected and all the Lepcha houses were visited for collection of data on their socio-economic life. Some additional information was also gathered both from observation and from interviews which have been incorporated in the chapter—'Dynamics of the Society'.

The data for material culture have been collected by visiting the villages—Bong, Nimbong, Gnaste and Kalimpong Khas:

Mahal, besides Sindipong itself. The materials for cultural, social, religious life etc. have been collected from the villagers of Sindipong, Gnaste, Tripai, Pedong etc. Although hundreds of people have been helpful in collection of information, names of four persons deserve special mention, (i) Sree J. Rongeong (Secretary, Lepcha Association), (ii) Sree K. P. Tamsong (President, Lepcha Association), (iii) Sree Tshering Ongchhuk (Head Lama, Mani Gumpha), and (iv) Sree Fonning, to whom we are grateful. We express our special thanks to the villagers of Sindipong but for whose help this study could not have been successfully conducted though people of other villages too have in general been helpful.

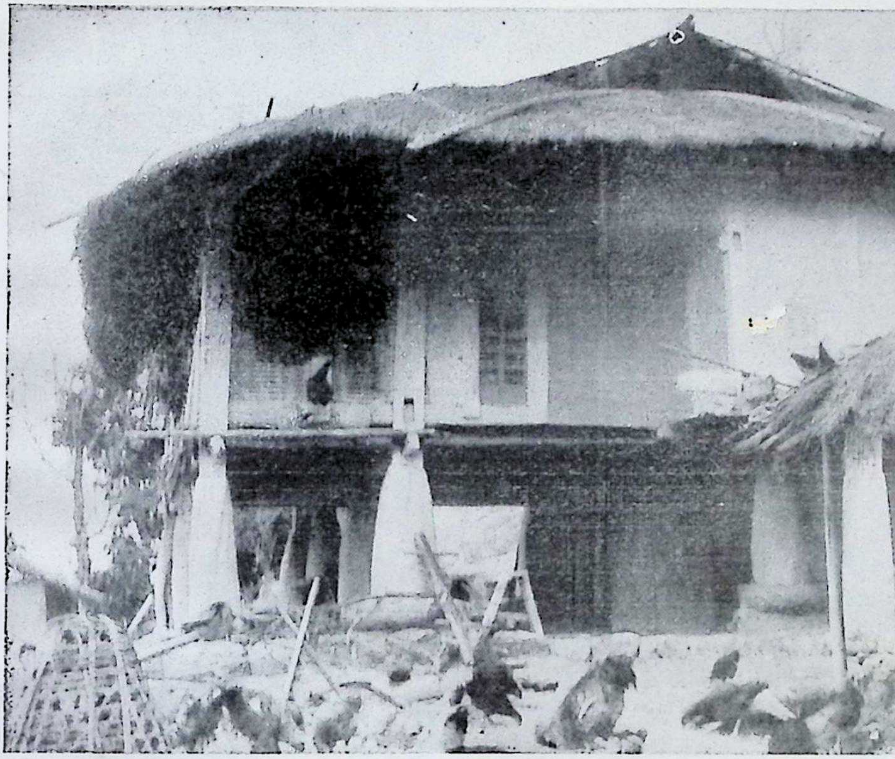
Lastly, it is to be mentioned that being restricted in its scope and extent, this study does not furnish an exhaustive account of all the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the Lepchas. However, as it is the first systematic study among the Lepchas, it is expected to serve as a base line for future detailed studies in similar lines and would be helpful to a great extent in further studies of continuity and nature and degree of change of their culture.



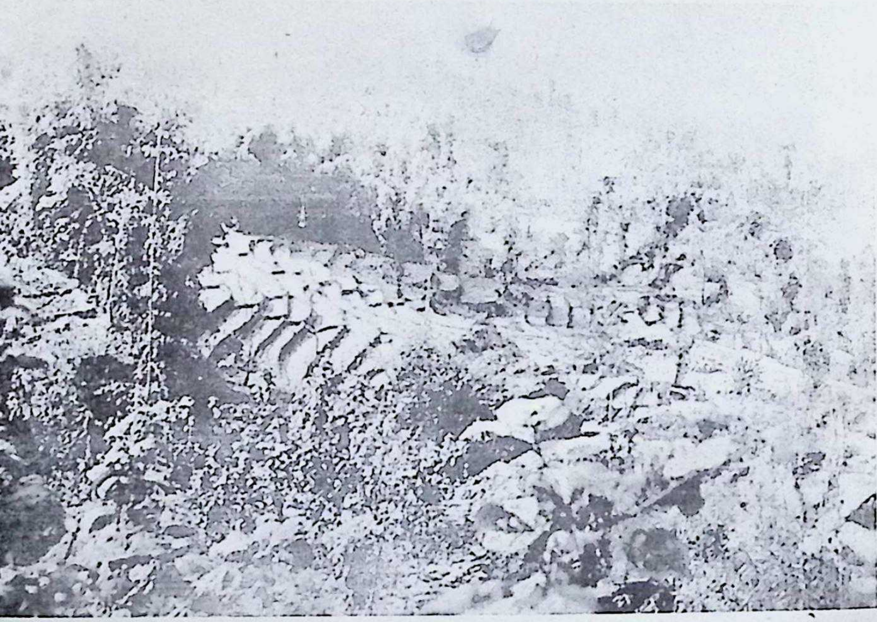
Inner view of *Mani Gumpha.*

Sree Ongchhuk, Head Lama.

Lepcha House.

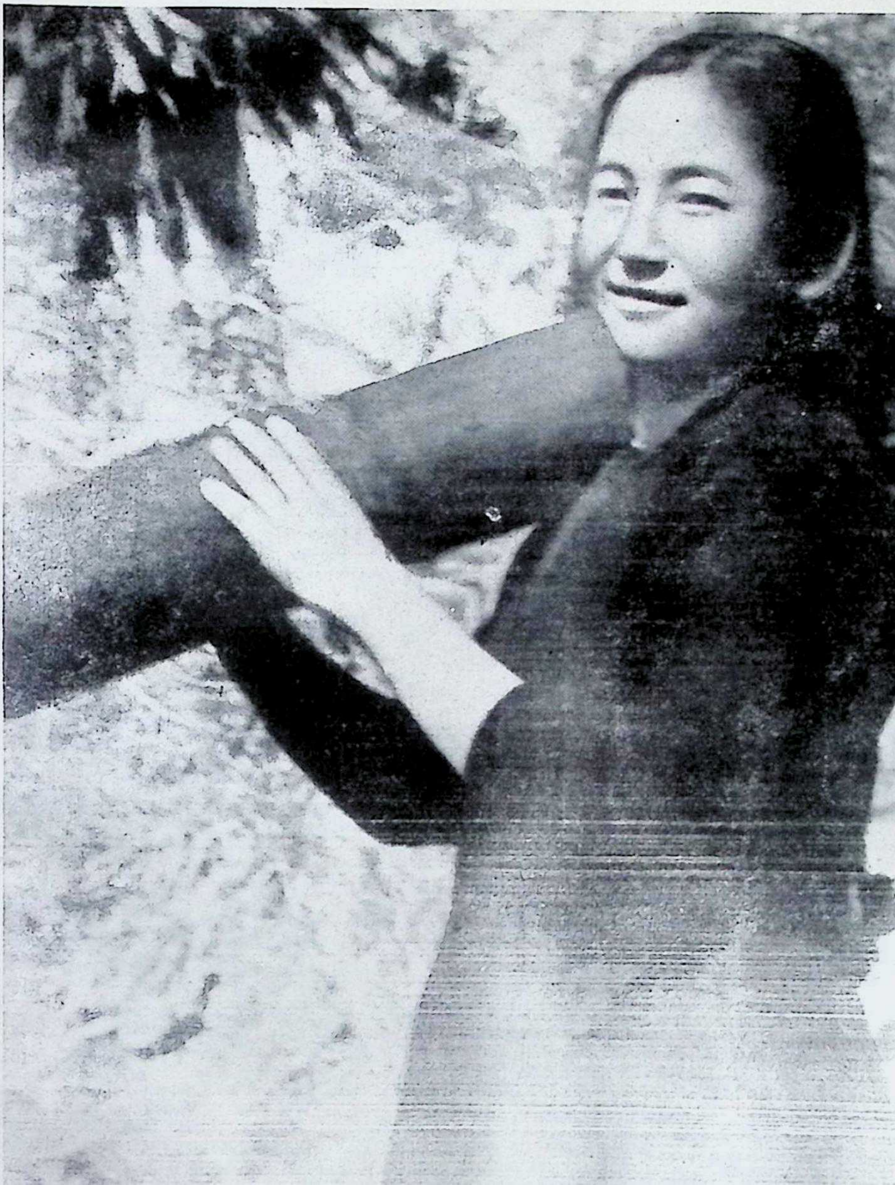


Devotee turning the *Prayer wheel.*

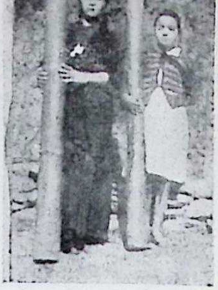


Ready for *terrace* cultivation.

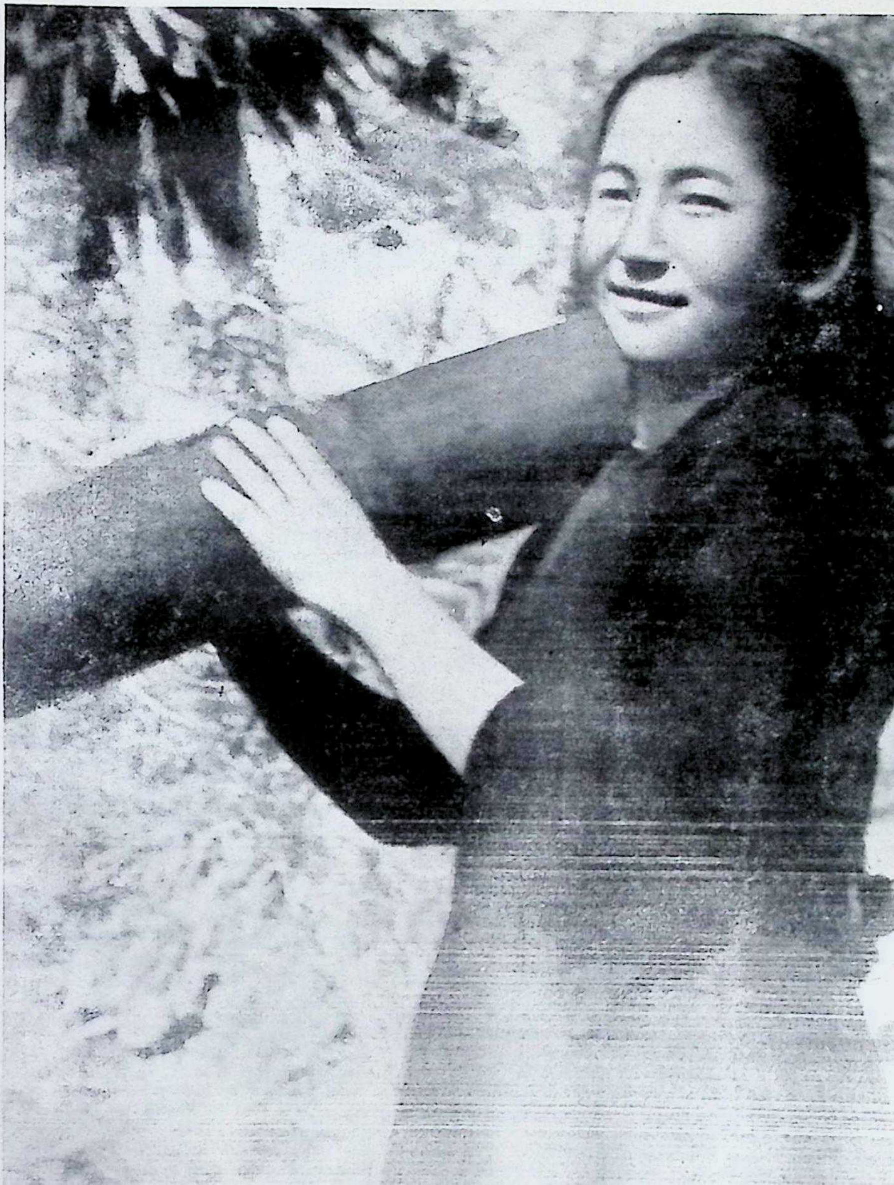
Carrying water
in *Pathyot* (Bamboo container).

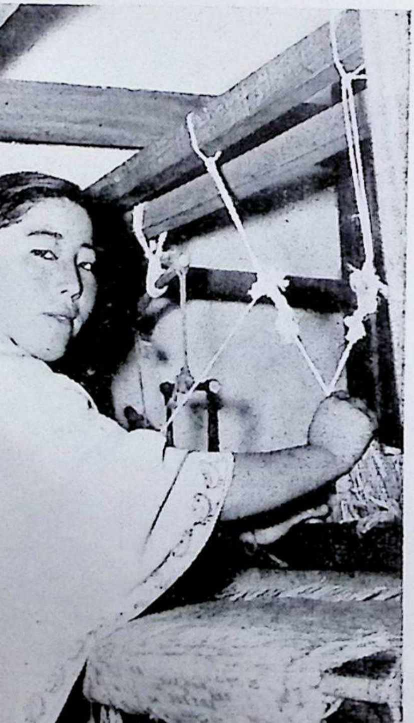


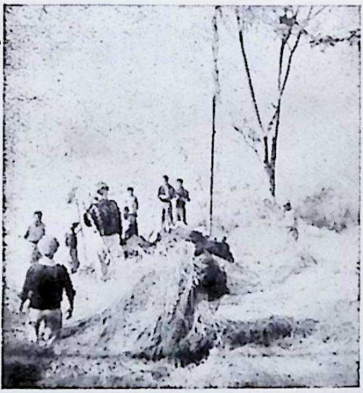
Ready for *terrace* cultivation.



Carrying water
in *Pathyot* (Bamboo container).



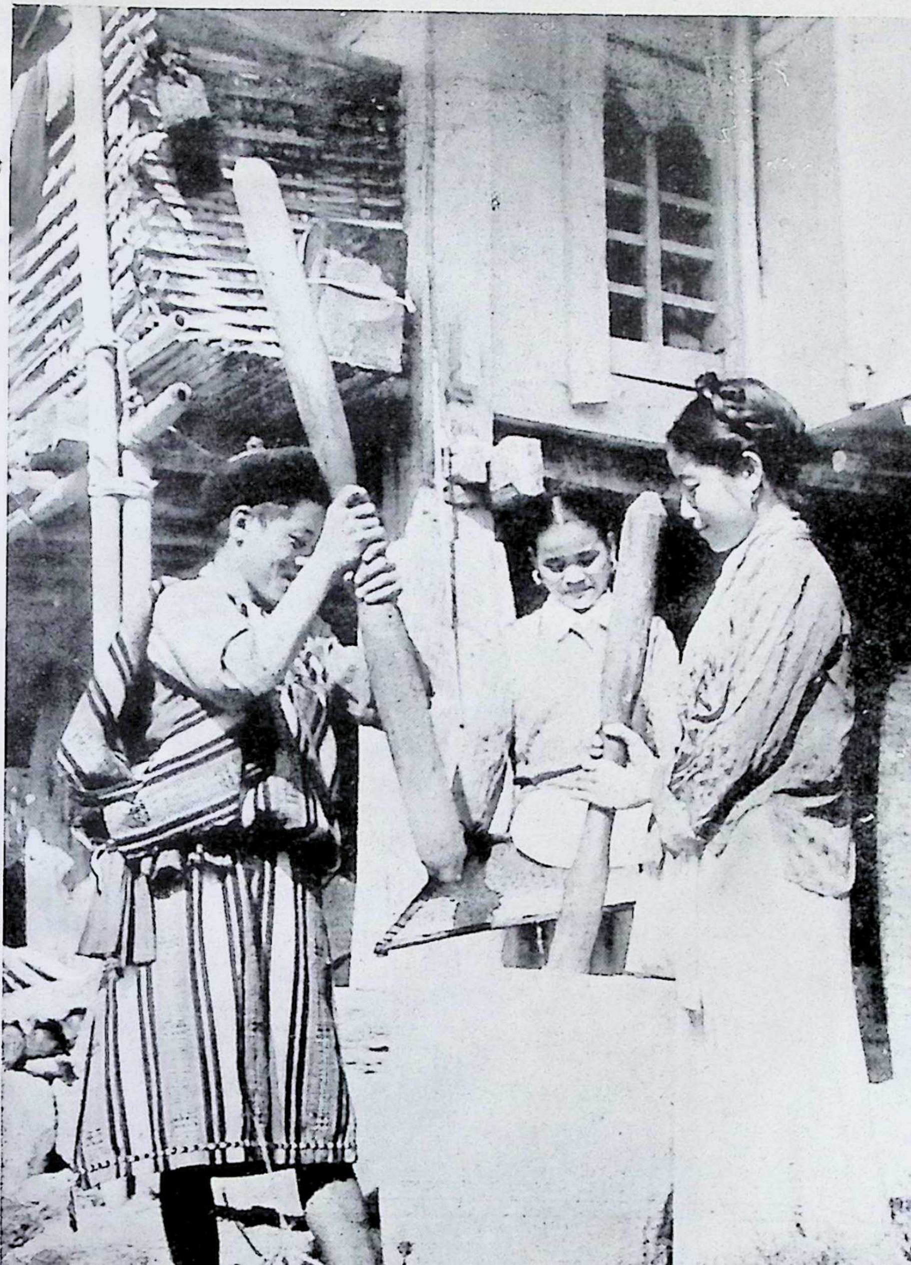




Thrashing yard.

Busy with the loom.

Mortar & Pestle.



Busy with his flute.

A charming look.

A village maiden.

Mr. Rongeong,
Secretary Lepcha Association.

A Family Head.

Newly Wed Couple.

A. Lepcha Leader.

CHAPTER 1

LAND AND THE PEOPLE

THE ENVIRONMENT

The following short account of the region (Darjeeling) is furnished below for providing a general background idea regarding the environment in which the Lepchas live. This will facilitate the understanding and appreciation of the life and culture of the Lepcha people.

Darjeeling is the northernmost district of West Bengal and is bounded on the West by Nepal, on the north by Sikkim, and on the east by Bhutan, and the district of Jalpaiguri (West Bengal) lies on its south. It has four sub-divisions, namely, Sadar or Darjeeling, Kurseong, Siliguri and Kalimpong. The Lepchas are mainly concentrated in Kalimpong and Gurubathan Police Stations of Kalimpong sub-division and as such the study was mainly carried on in a few villages of Kalimpong Police Station.

The Lepchas are at present found in Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Nepal and also in a small number in Bhutan. The original homeland of the Lepchas is in Sikkim wherefrom a good number of them migrated to Darjeeling district a long time ago and they may be regarded as the original settlers of this area. The present-day Lepchas of Darjeeling district generally live interspersed with the rest of the people of the district.

Darjeeling district consists of a portion of outlying hills of the lower Himalayas and a stretch of territory lying along the base of the hills known as Terai. It is full of hills and valleys covered with dense forests, dripping with moisture. The rivers of the district drain to the south, to the west, and to the east, forming a series of tributaries of the Teesta.

The Geological formation is of sedimentary rocks confined to the hills of the south and different grades of metamorphic rocks over the rest of the area. Coal, graphite, iron, copper ores, lime etc. are a few important minerals found in the district.

In the hills three types of soil are generally recognised—black, white and red. Black soil is the most fertile of the three, red is of intermediary type and white the poorest among them. Red soil requires a good amount of manuring to produce an yield equal to that of black soil and is suitable for dry crops (Sukhakhet), such as, maize and millet (kodo), on account of the rich vegetable mould it contains. Generally, the soil throughout the district is deficient in lime. As a result of a number of physiographic, climatic, edaphic and biotic factors, the district is very rich in a variety of vegetation. The fauna of the district is varied and interesting due to the diversity of the elevation, climate and vegetation.

About eighty to ninety species of mammals are found in this district and notable among them are monkeys, tigers, leopards, Himalayan cats, livets, mongooses etc. Varieties of birds are another attraction of this district and about 550 species of them are found in this area. Another feature of this district is the presence of about 125 species of fishes.

The climate of this district varies from place to place. For example, Kalimpong gets about 86″ of rain annually whereas Darjeeling and Kurseong 126″ and 159″ respectively.

The most important characteristic feature of this district that deserves special mention is the Himalayas which has nearly surrounded the district by a belt. The Himalayas, the Lord of the people, has found place in every walk of life of the inhabitants and its immense solemnity and beauty influenced to a great extent their temparament, literature and culture.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME LEPCHA

The name "Lepcha" has been derived from a Nepali word *Lapcha*, meaning 'vile speakers', and a general belief exists among them that the Gurkhas termed them as "Lapcha" in contempt. A second version regarding the origin of the term Lepcha is as follows:

There is a type of fish in Nepal known as Lapcha. This Lapcha fish is very submissive in nature like the Lepcha people who are also noted for their submissiveness and as such the Nepalis termed them as Lapcha not in contempt but to give them credit for their submissive temparament. However the word "Lapcha" has further been modified to "Lepcha" in English pronunciation; still the Nepalis refer to them as Lapchas.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Lepchas belong to the Mongoloid racial stock and a few important physical features of these people are given below. Their complexion varies from yellowish brown to light yellow. Stature of the males generally varies from medium to short though a few tall Lepchas are also found in this area. Females are generally short in stature and strong built like the Lepcha males. The head form varies from mesocephal to brachycephal (i.e. medium to round) with straight black hair. The face is broad and flat with prominent cheekbone and the nose form varies from mesorrhine to platyrrhine (i.e., medium to broad) which is further depressed at the root. The eyes are slightly oblique having epicanthic fold. The absence of hair on the body and face of the males and the peculiar style of arranging their hair sometimes confuse a stranger about the sex of the individual. Previously the males used to keep long hair like females but now-a-days they keep much shorter hair. In general, the males and females are well built with a well-proportionate body. But the muscular development of their limbs is less prominent than other Mongoloid racial groups found in this district.

CHARACTER STRUCTURE

The Lepchas are intelligent, amiable and always cheerful. They are modest and social and a pleasant smile is always visible on their lips.

They are great lovers of all sorts of sports which involve physical exercise (such as racing, wrestling, jumping etc.).

They are honest—theft is rarely found among them—and they do not quarrel among themselves or with outsiders. Though they keep knives with them they never use these against one another. They are peaceful, industrious and are averse to serving for others. If they by chance lose temper, they become ashmed immediately afterwards and apologise.

They are peace-loving and do not try to resist things that may even bring harm to them. It is very difficult to find such a type of character structure in a community in the present-day world. Relatives, friends, strangers etc. cannot but admire them as hosts. Their healthy physique with unique character structure adds to the beauty of their land.

LANGUAGE

"Lepcha" or "Rong" is the language of the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim. Lepchas call themselves 'Rong' meaning thereby the dwellers of rocky land and the term 'Rong' has been derived from the word 'Rinjong', meaning rock land full of respectable people. Rong literature comprises Buddhistic and other religious books etc. and it has got a script of its own which is akin to Bhutia. Some scholars are of opinion that this language has a great tradition behind it, and is very old, even older than many ancient languages.

The most important characteristic of this language is that any one can easily communicate their ideas by means of monosyllabic and disyllabic words. Another interesting feature of this language is the absence of any slang words. G. A. Grierson has classified the Lepcha language in the Tibeto-Himalayan group of Tibeto-Chinese family. The presence of pronominalised verbal formations suggest a Kolarian (Mundari) influence on the language. Lepcha is the only pronominalised hill language of the Tibeto-Burman family.

At present in the interior regions, Lepcha language still persists to be the mother tongue of the Lepchas, but in the urban areas in general, and also in a few rural areas where they live in small numbers, the language is generally under the spell of Nepali language. The Lepcha alphabet consists of 35 consonants, 8 vowels, and 12 more diacritical marks, the combination of which can form thousands of words. The alphabet was adapted in the seventeenth century and a grammar was written by Colonel G. B. Mainwaring in December, 1875 (year of publication 1876). Because of the absence of the aspirate sonants, like G+H, J+H, B+H etc. the Lepchas find it difficult to pronounce some alien words.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR MIGRATION

The East India Company acquired the nucleus of Darjeeling district in the year 1835 when the population of the area was only 100 in 138 square miles. The decision of the Company to develop this hilly tract as a hill resort gave an impetus to neighbouring communities to immigrate and take part in its development. The original inhabitants, the Lepchas, were rapidly outnumbered by settlers from Nepal and Sikkim, and by 1850 the population rose to 10,000 which again went up beyond 22,000 in 1869. The population of Kalimpong was 3,536 in 1865 which increased to 12,683 in 1881. In the subsequent decades the immigration of population was mainly due to the rapid growth of tea estates in this area. Kalimpong, a vast forest area, was a Government estate in 1891 and had only two tea gardens and two chinchona plantations, the remaining land being utilised as agricultural plots by settlers from Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan as well as by the original Lepcha inhabitants. During the period 1891 to 1901 there was a marked increase of population, the highest being in Kalimpong where the waste land was brought under cultivation by settlers from Nepal. Between 1901-1911 there was a decline of population indiacting substantial decrease in immigration.

The rate of increase in the volume of population between 1901 to 1951 is not so marked as it was during the period 1872-1921.

The above account gives an idea regarding the migration of general population to this district, and it is now proposed to examine the variation of Lepcha population during the period 1872-1951 in the above light, the figures of which are furnished in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Lepcha population and its percentage variation from 1872 to 1951 in West Bengal.

Year	Total number of Lepchas	Percentage variation since 1901.
(1)	(2)	(3)
1872	3,952	–
1881	26	–
1891	9,717	–
1901	10,052	–
1911	9,842	– 2.1
1921	9,669	– 3.8
1931	12,719	+ 26.5
1941	12,468	+ 24.0
1951	13,430	+ 33.6

Source : Census 1951 (Tribes and Castes of Bengal).

The Table shows that the Lepcha population has increased by 33.6% during the period 1901-1951 and if the period 1872-1951 be taken into consideration we find an increase of population of 265 per cent. The 1881 Census gives the Lepcha population to be only 26 which does not appear to be accurate. There was a slight decline in the growth of population during the period 1911-1921. From 1921 onwards the Lepcha population has steadily increased except in the year 1941 wherein a fall in the rate of increase is noticed. It is difficult to state at this stage to what extent this rate of increase in population is affected by migration and/or growth rate. This calls for a detailed separate study.

Twelve Scheduled Tribe communities are at present found in the Darjeeling district. The population figures of these Scheduled Tribe communities are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of Scheduled Tribes population in Darjeeling district

Name of the Scheduled Tribe.	Total number of population of each tribe.	Percentage distribution.
(1)	(2)	(3)
1. Oraon	17217	36.99
2. Lepcha	13164	28.29
3. Munda	5752	12.36
4. Bhutia	4018	8.63
5. Santal	3481	7.48
6. Malpaharia	1367	2.93
7. Mahali	652	1.40
8. Nagesia	428	0.92
9. Mech	224	0.49
10. Mru	195	0.42
11. Kora	32	0.07
12. Bhumij	9	0.02
TOTAL	46,539	100.00

Source : Census Hand Book, 1951.

The Oraons, an immigrated Scheduled Tribe community in Darjeeling district, top the list in the composition of population of Scheduled Tribes of this district having 37% to its credit. They migrated from Chota Nagpur area of Bihar to work as tea garden labourers.

The Lepchas, the original settlers, come next in the list with a population of 28.3%. Mundas and Santals who have mainly migrated to this district as tea garden labourers from plain areas of Bengal constitute 12.4% and 7.5% respectively of the total Scheduled Tribes population of this district. Excepting Bhutias, the rest of the Scheduled Tribe communities of this district are meagre in number and have migrated from Bihar or from the plain areas of Bengal.

The distribution of Lepchas in West Bengal is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Distribution of Lepcha population by district, 1951.

District	Number of persons	Percentage of distribution
(1)	(2)	(3)
1. Darjeeling	13,164	97.91
2. Jalpaiguri	201	1.49
3. Hooghly	31	0.30
4. 24-Parganas	23	0.20
5. Calcutta	7	0.06
6. Midnapur	3	0.03
7. Howrah	1	0.01
TOTAL	13,430	100.00

Source: Census of 1951.

In West Bengal, out of 16 districts the Lepchas are found only in 7 districts, viz., Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Hooghly, 24-Parganas, Calcutta, Midnapur and Howrah. The highest concentration is in the Darjeeling district with a population of 13,164 i.e., 97.91% of the total Lepcha population of the State of West Bengal. Next in order comes Jalpaiguri district with a Lepcha population of 201 forming 1.5% of the total Lepcha population in the State.

Insignificant numbers of them are also found in the districts of Midnapur, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas and Calcutta where they have mainly mirgrated due to a variety of reasons, such as, trade, labour etc. Out of 13,430 Lepchas in West Bengal 6,927 are males and 6,503 females i.e., 939 females for every 1,000 males.

Lastly, it may be mentioned here, that in 1901 and 1911 all the Lephas were Buddhists in religion. In 1931, among the Lepchas there were 10,099 Buddhists, 1,950 Christians and and the rest (670) animists, and these few (670) animists are presumed to have decreased to an insignificant number now-a-days. This gives an idea about the rapid spread of Christianity among the Lepchas.

EARLY HISTORY

The original homeland of the Lepchas was Sikkim from where they migrated to Darjeeling district a long time ago. It was said that in the past Darjeeling district was a part of Sikkim whose boundary extended upto Donkea in the north, Peru (border of Bhutan) in the East, Titilia (border of Jalpaiguri district) in the south, and Aruntambur rivers (border of Nepal) in the West. The Lepchas were originally divided into three groups known as Rinjong Moo, Tamsong Moo and Ilam Moo. These names were taken according to the regions of their residence. In Lepcha language "Moo" is generally applied for "inhabitants" and thus "Tamsang Moo", "Rinjong Moo" and "Ilam Moo" mean the Lepchas who were the inhabitants respectively of "Tamsang", "Rinjong" and "Ilam" of Sikkim. The northern portion including north-east and north-west of Sikkim was known as Rinjong, eastern and south-eastern portion as Tamsong and western and south-western portion as Ilam. This physical division was determined from the point where the two rivers Teesta and Rungit met (near Peshoke). Later on a portion of Ilam was occupied by Nepal which was occasionally referred to as Ilam.

In the long past a member of the royal family of Tibet, who was an ancestor of the present Maharaja of Sikkim came over to Sikkim with a group of Tibetans and established himself as a king. The fertility of the land had induced the Tibetans to settle here and Sikkim was known at that time to the Tibetans as the land of rice. The peace-loving Lepchas would not resist the Tibetans and gradually were overpowered by them. Initially there was constant quarrel between the conquerors and the conquered but from the time of "Phuntshog Namgyal", a close amity developed between the Maharaja and his subjects. It was from his time that Buddhism began spreading all over Sikkim.

It was found that many members of the royal family of Sikkim had matrimonial connexion with the Lepchas.

Sikkim which was known to the Lepchas as *Nye-ma-el* (meaning heaven) had suffered a series of attacks from the three neighbouring kingdoms, Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. Many of these invasions mainly took place due to internal conflict among the members of the royal family who sought help from the neighbouring kingdoms. In this way, Sikkim had to cede many portions of her territory to her neighbours. Thus the east portion of Teesta river viz., Damsong, Daling or Dalim and a few places had been given to Bhutan. The present portion of Kalimpong had been conquered by Bhutan. Nepal, on the other hand, attacked Sikkim from west side. In all these invasions the Lepchas showed courage and loyalty for the Maharajas, while the people of other communities became treacherous. The Lepcha people headed by a Lepcha Minister "Karwang" remained loyal all through. "Karwang" owing to his faithfulness was made the prime minister and it was during his time that Nepal attacked Sikkim continuously and vigorously but the simple Lepchas had the courage to stand against the enemy under the leadership of "Chhung Jat Chhukpat", a son of "Karwang". "Chhukpat" was honoured with the title of *Satrajit* (valour) by the then king of Nepal "Pithinarayan", and Nepal was forced to make treaty with Sikkim. But ultimately, violating all the treaties Nepal attacked and captured Sikkim to her utter surprise. It was from this time that British help was taken to make Sikkim free from Nepal.

There was a revolt known as "Kotapa revolt" in Sikkim which resulted from a quarrel between the members of royal family. One of them took the help of the Gurkhas who attacked Sikkim and the Maharaja finding no other way sought the help of the British government and successfully put down the rebellion and for this Darjeeling was ceded to India in 1835. The Government of British India then paid a sum of rupees three thousand as annual revenue of Darjeeling which was later on enhanced to six thousand rupees. Kalimpong sub-division was annexed from Bhutan after the Bhutan war of 1865.

CHAPTER 2

MATERIAL CULTURE

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The Lepcha villages in Darjeeling district constitute important socio-political units and play a dominant part in their life and activities.

The villages are generally situated on the slopes of hills and are known as "Bustee", such as, Gnaste Bustee, Sindipong Bustee etc. The selection of the site of the villages in this part of the country is mainly guided by proximity to the water sources and the abundance of suitable cultivable land. The Lepchas, the original settlers of this district, were often driven from place to place on account of successive conquests by Tibetans, Bhutias etc. This, along with the reservation of forests by the Government, led them to live in smaller hilly tracts.

In the general layout of Lepcha villages, systematic planning is generally neglected and it is often found that some villages are scattered wide on the hills and some are stretched on a plain area like a straight line. A number of houses (about 10) are found to be clustered together in one place constituting one hamlet, seperated from a similar hamlet of clustered houses by a track of land without any habitation. In some villages, hauses are scattered wide on the hills and no two houses could be found at a stone's throw. It is said that previously they used to lay their villages in a systematic way with guard-houses and defensive structures on all sides mainly as protection against enemies and wild animals. This defensive pattern is not found in present-day Lepcha villages but they are naturally protected by high hills and dense forests. There is no easy approach to some of the interrior villages.

It is very diffiiult for an outsider to visit all the houses of a village in a short time as these are scattered throughout the length and breadth of the rigion with very poor communication facilities. Lanes and bye-lanes are hardly visible in Lepcha villages. Most of the villages have places of worship which serve the purpose of an assembly place and all ceremonial functions and festivities are generally held there. Monastery or "Gumpha", the worshipping place, is closely associated with Lepcha life and culture around which village organisation as well as social and cultural life develop. In these worshipping places large bamboo poles with Buddhist flags can be seen which depict the religious creed of the people. The flags are inscribed with the teachings of Lord Buddha, mostly in archaic Tibetan script. Primary schools are found in many villages but high schools are very rare. Burial ground is either situated in a particular village or in a nearby village which is generally not far from that village. The common water sources are rivers, tanks, waterfalls (Jhari or Jhora as locally called) and also tap water in certain areas. No planned drainage system has developed in the villages but the hilly tract does not create any drainage problem.

The Lepcha villages of this area are of multi-clan types and people do not follow any typical kins or clans pattern in their settlement structure. Every hamlet consists of people of different clans, kins and communities .

A list of villages in Darjeeling district with 200 or more Lepcha population is given in the next page.

LAND AND LAND HOLDING

Lepchas are mainly cultivators and their cultivable fields are situated on the slopes of the hills either in the vicinity of the village or at some distances from it. Their houses are often surrounded with gardens of flowers and vegetables. Homestead land is generally very small varying from 0.06 to 0.12 acres per household. Cultivable land per household is very small and scattered in small fragments and this fragmentation of land is preferred in this area for the facility of cultivation in a hill slope and not due to any social reason, unlike in plain areas. The area of each fragment usually varies from 0.03 to 0.10 acres.

THE HOUSE

Each village is comprised of a number of domiciles and in a domicile, besides the dwelling hut, there are other huts, such as, granary, farm house etc. The cattleshed is often found attached to the dwelling hut. A short description of a typical Lepcha house is given in the next page.

Darjeeling Villages with 200 or more Lepcha population.

Name of the police Stations.	Name of the villages.
1. Kalimpong.	(1) Lingsekha (2) Gitdabling (3) Nibong (4) Pemling (5) Ngasey Gaon, Chiho, K. Block (6) Yangurakura (7) Bong (8) Kalimpong (9) Sindipong (10) Sangser (11) Paizing (12) Dalamchan (13) Lola (14) Karikihanf (15) Gitdhuling (16) Sakyong (17) Maria (18) Sunduk (19) Pala (20) Numbong (21) Samthan (22) Sasuk (23) Tongmokung (24) Yuhgaon (25) Pabrintton (26) Sirji (27) Samalbong (28) Ludain.
2. Pedong.	Kashyon
3. Kurseong.	Sitong-khasmahal.
*4. Gurubathan.	Lamahatta.

* There are a few more villages in Gurubathan Police Station where an appreciable number of Lepchas live.

CONSTRUCTION

The dwelling house of a Lepcha is known as *"Dukenculee"* in their language, which has generally a rectangular ground plan with a circular roof made up of straw (Sirubari). A few huts with a rectangular roof of bamboo mat can also be seen. The floor of the house is generally made with wooden planks (Anto) and the walls with bamboo matting plastered with a thin layer of clay. The roof is supported by a number of good-sized undressed timber known as *Dampu* which are inserted in the ground. The most intersting characteristic of the construction of Lepcha houses is that they never use any kind of nails or screws for construction purposes. The big wooden beams meant for supporting the roof are generally inserted through one another in a criss-cross way. The wooden floor of house is generally constructed 3′—4′ above the ground, keeping a continuous space beneath it which is used for keeping domesticated animals such as pigs, poultry birds etc.

The main entrance to the house is generally situated in the front side towards the elevation of the hill. The windows are situated on the sloping side of the hill where there is a back door also. The dwelling house of the Lepchas generally consists of two bed rooms, one kitchen-cum-store room and in each of these rooms at least one window can be found. The houses are quite well ventilated having sufficient light. Both in the front and back portion of the house there are small verandahs which are used as sitting or drawing rooms. The walls of the rooms are beautifully decorated with different types of pictures, photos etc.

The cow-shed is usually constructed a few yeards away from the dwelling house for hygienic reasons. The roof of the cow-shed is made up of bamboo mat or straw supported by wooden beams. The sides of the shed are not covered and the cows live in the shed in a row.

On the whole it may be said that the Lepcha houses are strongly built to withstand hard climate of the hills and the people are very much conscious about the sanitary and hygienic problems for which they take adequate care while constructing their houses.

The materials required for the construction of the houses are locally available and can be procured at a low cost (about Rs. 150). No seasonal repair is required for their houses. The roof needs repair, occasionally (at intervals of 3 or 4 years) by replacing partially or fully the straw or mat, the cost of which varies from Rs. 5 to 50. Lepchas themselves build their own houses and a good number of experts in this art can be found in their community. Male's share in the constructional activities is much more than the female's who generally helps in more and less labourious jobs. No elaborate ritualistic functions are performed by them during the selection of sites or starting the construction, or at the time of entry into new houses. But a magico-religious rite is performed at the time of construction, which is done by *Bonthing* (priest) by sacrificing fowls (usually two in number) to the evil spirits so that they will not do any harm to the people or bring ill luck to the houses.

The latrines of the Lepcha houses are generally situated some yards away from the dwelling houses and are constructed with bamboo matting walls, with roofs of bamboo matting or straw. Beneath the platform there is a ditch where the night soil collects and the usual method of removing the night soil is by the agency of rain water. Hence the latrine is very unhygienic, and dirty and stinky and no sweeper is easily available in bustis for cleaning latrines.

AGRICULTURE

Jhum or shifting cultivation was the usual tradition of the Lepchas. They used to burn down a patch of jungle land, cultivate it for a year or two and then move on to some other jungle areas.

Now-a-days settled terrace cultivation is practised by majority of the people and this is the principal subsistence activity. Both sexes participate approximately equally in this activity. But they are poor agriculturists and they follow neither the improved methods of cultivation nor take sufficient care of their land. They cultivate just enough for their subsistence. When their stock of grain falls short they earn a living from other sources such as hired labour etc. They cultivate their land by family labour and scarcely employ hired labour, as their poor income does not permit this luxury.

In old days, they had no plough and their implements were used mainly for scraping and softening the soil for the reception of seeds. Now the method employed for cultivation is more or less similar to that of plain area of the state. The agricultural operation starts with the tilling of the land by means of a plough or "Hullo" or "Khasit" as they call it. Two bullocks are generally used for ploughing and this whole thing is called as "A Sing"; as for tilling the stiff soils of the hilly region they use a plough heavier (about 20 seers) than the ones used in the plains.

The wooden beam of the plough is tied to the wooden yoke with a leather rope. The plough share is generally made up of iron but wood is also sometimes used. The life of one plough varies from three to four years after which it needs repair. The whole set of plough costs about Rs. 12 to 16. The next operation after ploughing is harrowing which is done with a ladder-like frame made of bamboo or wood and at times an wooden plank known as "Dande" is also used for this. The life of a "Dande" is about 4 to 5 years after which it requires repairing. Manuring is seldom practised and this is the reason for poor yield and general lowering of the fertility of the soil. The modern scientific methods (such as line sowing, weeding by improved implements etc.) are generally not adopted by the Lepcha cultivators. After harrowing the field, the transplantation is done. A separate seedbed is prepared for seedlings known as "Bue" and from the seedbed seedlings are trnsplanted directly in the cultivated area. The local term used for this process is known as "Rouna" and is done by hand. Weeding is the next operation and is done by means of sickle or "Kaste" or "Ban", similar to that used in the plain area. It is made of iron and the duration of its life is about 6 to 8 years after which a minor repairing is required. The old process of weeding still practised, often causes damage to the crop. The next operation is harvesting (Anjo) and is also done by "Kaste" or sickle. They place the crop in bunches in a basket (Doku or Tungzang) and suspending it by means of a strap-like rope against the forehead they carry them in their backs to the farm house where threshing, winnowing etc. are done. Threshing is done by hand and they thresh the crops against a piece of wooden board. Many Lepchas have got husking lever or "Tak Bam" by which they thrash the crops. This process is generally carried out by women. This "Tak Bam" is made of wood and lasts for more than 10 years. Other operations (winnowing, storing etc.) are generally done by manual labour. As the Lepchas are very poor, most of their farm products are wholly consumed by themselves. Very few of them are lucky enough to save any portion of the crops for selling in the market or *hat*.

Only a few of their agricultural implements are produced by the farmers themselves but a good many of these are purchased from local people, some of whom are Lepchas. Some of the implements last longer than others and average annual cost of implements for cultivation is about Rs. 30/-. But an ordinary cultivator cannot afford more than Rs. 5/- for an acre of land which is another reason of their low output.

Table 4 gives an idea about the types of land and the different cereals cultivated in these lands and the months in which different types of agricultural operations are done.

The Lepchas classify cultivable land generally into two types: (i) Panikhet and (ii) Sukhakhet. The Panikhet or water-logged land is suitable for the cultivation of paddy (Zo) and maize (Makai) and Sukhakhet or dry land is for millet (Kodo) cultivation. A good portion of land remains fallow in each year. The fallow land depends on the availability or excessiveness of water as some of the lands are water-logged and some dry. Hence a cultivator cannot count on all his cultivable lands each year. The result of the analysis of soil content from Kalimpong farm (analysed by Microbiologists, Government of West Bengal) shows that the soil in this part

Table 4

Agricultural operations by month and type of land.

Agricultural operation.	Month * in which agricultural operations practised in different types of land.		
	Panikhet or wet land		Sukha khet or dry land.
	paddy-growing land	Maize-growing land	Millets or "kodo" growing land.
1. Ploughing	Tafa-Blung (April-June)	Thon (Feb.-March)	Purving (July-Aug.)
2. Harrowing or laddering	Num chum (June-July)	Sum (March-April)	Purving-Glu (August)
3. Sowing or Transplanting	Purving (July-Aug.)	Tafa (April-May)	Glu (September)
4. Weeding	Glu (Aug.-Sept.)	Blung (May-June)	Ith-Ra (Sept.-Nov.)
5. Harvesting	Ra-Mar (Nov.-Dec.)	Purving (July-August)	Mar (Nov.-Dec.)

* The months are according to Lepcha calendar.

of the country contains about 53% sand (fine and coarse mixed) and about 34% clay. The percentage of nitrogen is only about 0.13%. Due to poor sand-content and nitrogen deficiency the land is not fertile enough for profitable cultivation and hence the yield per acre is very low. It was told by the Lepchas that 8 or 9 maunds of rice per acre is a God's blessing. In this hill area sometimes the hill slopes are so hard and precipitious that nothing can thrive on them. Much of the hill land is unsuitable for cultivation of any kind, but on the gentler slopes of the hills the soil is often wonderfully fertile. No crops are generally grown beyond 9,500 feet above sea level owing to excessive cold. The above facts throw some light regarding the reason of the poor economic condition of a Lepcha cultivator.

Double or mixed cropping is almost absent among Lepcha cultivators. In a very few cases maize and paddy are sometimes found to be grown in the same field as double cropping but its percentage is negligible. Among the vegetables, cucumbers and brinjals are the most important and are mostly grown in the homestead and kitchen garden area.

It has already been mentioned that the Lepchas are poor cultivators and are inefficient users of the plough. They are particularly fond of growing orange and cardamom in lower valleys.

The local unit of measuring the land is acre and weighing the crop is "Muri" (1 muri=1½ maunds). The usual method of carrying the crop to hut is by means of bullock cart, the crop being loaded in baskets.

A short description of the major crops that are generally grown by the Lepcha cultivators is given below:—

(1) *Paddy*: Paddy is grown from plain level upto a height of about 5,000 fit. It is cultivated on water-logged land or "Panikhet", and no manuring is generally done. Seeds are sown in seed beds (of size about 1/6th of area to be planted out) and thereafter transplantation is done on the whole area. The yield is very low, being about 8 mds. per acre. Expenditure for cultivating an acre of land is not at all high in view of the fact that the labour force consists of family members. The total output of this crop is generally consumed by the cultivators themselves. Aman variety is the major paddy crop cultivated by the Lepchas.

(2) *Maize or "Makai"*: This is also one of the main crops of the Lepchas and is cultivated in panikhet, where sowing is done by broadcasting method. The yield per acre is as low as that of the paddy crop (8 mds.); expenditure per acre is also similarly low. This is generally consumed by themselves.

(3) *Millet or "Kodo"*: It is grown at heights between 1,000 and 5,000 feet above sea level and in dry land or "Sukhakhet". Seedbeds are prepared and transplantation follows. Both the yield and the cost per acre are very low. This crop also is consumed by themselves and "Chee" or home brewn liquor is

generally prepared out of it, which is a compulsory item in every social, religious and ritualistic ceremonies of the Lepchas,

As regards the division of labour in different types of agricultural operations it may be said that ploughing is exclusively done by the male members of the society while women participate in transplanting in a large number. Weeding is generally carried out by members of the both sexes while harvesting is mainly in the hands of the females but males also join hands in this operation. Preparation for marketing and marketing itself are generally done by males but females also participate. Threshing by "Takbam" is generally done by females.

Two types of cultivators are generally found among the Lepchas, (i) those who cultivate their own land and (ii) those who cultivate other's land on "adhi" or half-share terms.

There is only one festival connected with the agricultural operation which is performed after harvesting period. It has got no special name or significance. The people of each hamlet collects the crop in a central position and then "Bonthing" (priest) performs a magico-religious rite. Two fowls (Hick) and some quantity of "chee" are given by each family for offering to the evil spirits. The fowls are sacrificed and a major portion of them are taken by "Bonthing" after the rite is over. The rest is equally distributed among the participants. This rite starts at about 6 A.M. and continues till noon. All the participants drink much of 'chee'. After the rite is over, each family takes its share of crop, but no one can store the crop before this rite. The only significance of this rite is to propitiate the evil spirits.

The maize is usually stored over the ceiling of the room by means of rope and paddy in bags or earthen pots.

HORTICULTURE:

The Lepchas may be called born horticulturists. On entering a Lepcha village one can see beatiful coloured flowers all around. The land is very suitable for growing different species of flowers and Lepchas take full advantage of this. Some of the common flowers are wild dahlias and daisies, brambles and climbing roses, hydrangeas, fox gloves, fuchsias and gladiolis.

But they hardly sell those flowers, owing to their love and sense of beauty as regards flowers which they refuse to drag down to business level. The implements used for horticulture are spade (Takchee) and axe (Pri Rit).

HERBAL PLANTS

Herbal plants are the natures' gifts that grow in this hilly tract. Seldom one cultivates the plants but care is always taken by the Lepchas for their maintenance. These plants are considered very helpful in many diseases and they use them as medicine. For minor maladies like stomach trouble, headache etc. they always take to herbal drugs instead of consulting doctors. The Lepchas are of opinion that their herbal medicines are specially good for liver and stomach diseases and even for cough, cold and muscular pain. The Census Hand Book of Darjeeling District gives a list of herbal plants that commonly grow in this part of the country, many of which are frequently used by the Lepchas (see pp. clviii-cxcvii).

It is interesting to note that many of the plants of this area are known by Lepcha names, given after the name of a prominent Lepcha who started settlement in the area and recognised the utility thereof.

FISHING

The hilly tributaries of this region are flooded with water during rainy season when plenty of fishes are available. Fishing is commonly practised by the Lepchas although it does not play a major role in their subsistence activity. It is rather a hobby to them, which serves on the other hand as an important means of supplementing their diet. Out of 125 species of fishes found in this district only 9 types are generally eaten by the Lepchas, such as *Bhelda* (Baidis Badis), *Chedra* (Barillius sp.), *Khalisa Chuna* (Trichogaster Chuna), *Khalisa Lal* (Trichogaster fasciatus), *Panga* (Acanthophthalmus pangia), *Raj Bham* (Angiinlla Bengalensis), *Telchita* (Glyptothorase talchitta), *Dami Kona* (Rasbora Daniconus), and *Darangi* (Esomus danricus).

Young Lepcha men and boys only participate in this activity during rainy season and generally after the completion of agricultural operations. Though it is not prohibited for the females they generally refrain from it due to the streneous nature of the activity.

The common and most widely practised method applied by them for catching fish is trapping by means of basket-traps which are known as "Vir Tangsit'' in Lepcha language. These basket-traps are very big in size, made out of cane or bamboo splits with net in the mouth. The fishes are generally driven by a few persons to a suitable corner of the ditch or rivulet where one or two people trap them. Lepchas generally prepare these traps, though sometimes they purchase these from local markets. Sometimes they catch fish by means of net (Sringli) which costs about Rs. 5. On some occasions they found to make their own nets. Fish caught individually is not usually distributed among villagers but sometimes share is given to relatives. No ceremony is performed either before leaving for or on returning from fishing operations.

HUNTING

The next important activity of the Lepchas is hunting although it is not the principal means of subsistence. Hunting helps them to supplement their food with animal protein. Hunting can also be regarded as a sport to them.

Hunting is always conducted on a community basis and during winter or just after the harvesting operation, they march to nearby forests with bows and arrows, spears, *dao* and knives. The weapon most commonly used by them for hunting is bows and arrows known as "Slu and Chong" in their language. They usually prepare these weapons with bamboo, string and iron. They generally hunt deer (Kosok), hare (Kuching). wild Yak (Punjakbak) etc. which are easily available in nearby forests.

The villagers who participate in the hunting operations get equal shares of the meat of the hunted game. Only the male folk take part in hunting, women and children are not allowed as it involves danger and strain. No ceremony is performed before starting for or returning from hunting operations excepting merry-making with "chee" or home brewn liquor on returning home from hunting.

GATHERING

Members of both the sexes occasionally go out for gathering herbal and other vegetable plants. Males are very fond of collecting small fauna to supplement their dishes. No particular time is fixed for this purpose.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The Lepchas keep domesticated animals in appreciably good number, most of which are often milked. Animal husbandry is important though not the major subsistence activity and members of both the sexes participate, but the male's share is appreciably greater in this activity. Among the domesticated animals, the following are most important:— Cow, bull, pig, poultry bird, horse etc.

The fodder (Beuk) for cattle grows abundantly in this region and the cost of maintenance of cattle and other domesticated animals is not high. The output is mainly consumed for family purposes. Domesticated animals are also sometimes consumed as meat. They usually keep large number of poultry birds because in every magico-religious rite (many in number), these are required to be sacrificed.

DOMESTIC UTENSILS

The Lepchas use different types of vessels for cooking food over simple types of ovens (made of mud), using wood and dry leaves as fuel. Earthen pot, known as "Fitok" in Lepcha language is commonly used for cooking rice, vegetable curry etc. and also for storing rice. Plates are generally made from wood. "Tali" or spoon is made of bamboo and used for all sundry purposes in cooking and distributing food. "Zaru" is also another type of spoon with a deep groove in the middle and is made out of bamboo. The Lepchas are always habituated to carrying water from nearby tanks or tributaries of river or "Jhora" by means of "Padam" made out of bamboo. It is about 6 to 8 feet in length and water is also stored in this pot. "Chee" or home brewn liquor is inevitable in every social and religious festival and is prepared and distributed in a peculiar pot known as "Pathyoth" which is nothing but a bamboo piece about 2 feet in length with a deep groove in the middle. A sucking pipe (known as "Pohip") like a straw pipe which is made of hollow bamboo stick always accompanies the "Chee" pot. The milk pot in which the cow is milked (known as "Injidut") is like a "Pathyoth".

On a scrutiny of their household utensils it will be seen that bamboo is the most common material used for making utensils and the earthen materials come next. The life of the utensils prepared from bamboo is more than a year and since bamboo grows in abundance in this region, the cost is always quite low. These pots are also very convenient in this cold region.

Bamboo utensils are generally prepared by themselves but earthen vessels are purchased from local markets.

Now-a-days the Lepchas are using cooking pots of aluminium, purchased from local markets. These aluminium vessels are imported and are particularly found in the villages near the Kalimpong Bazar (urban area). They now even store water in pots of brass or aluminium. But the people of interior villages still adhere to their traditional bamboo utensils. The other most common household articles found in Lepcha houses are : hurricane lantern, hearth made of bricks and mud, stool (wooden) etc. Very few of them use cots.

WEAPONS

They keep spear, *dao* and knives but never use these against each other or outsiders. These are generally used against wild animals and during hunting operations. Spear is known as

"Singing" in their language. These weapons are purchased from the local markets.

FOOD AND DRINKS

The day starts in a Lepcha family with the cooking of rice. Rice is their main staple food next to which comes maize.

The Lepchas usually supplement their dishes with rich portein of fish, meat etc. Pork is a staple dish and beef is a favourite food. Previously they used to eat all kinds of animals, from elephant, rhinoceros, to monkey. But now they indulge in eating beef, goat, mutton and poultry birds. The yak or "Punjak Bak" in Lepcha language is considered to be the best beef, the next is the flesh of Sikkim cow, a fine animal and last is the common cow of the plain area of this country. Almost all types of birds are included in their favourite dishes.

Now-a-days they are habituated to eating all sorts of grains, pulses and vegetables known in the plain area, most of which are purchased from local markets. They even eat different kinds of roots and plants, many of which are not used as food by other community people.

Cooking is coarse and dirty and majority of these articles of food are cooked. They use salt (although in small quantity), oil and other common spices in their cooking.

They never take *pan* (betel leaf) and are too poor to purchase tobacco and too indolent to grow and cure it. Nevertheless, they smoke tobacco whenever it is available to them.

Their intoxicating drink is "Chee" or home brewn liquor which appears more to excite than to debase the mind. "Chee" is prepared from "Kodo", a millet which grows abundantly in their cultivable land. After harvesting of "Kodo" in the month of November-December, it is thrashed and husked and boiled in a pot. After boiling Kodo, it is dried in the sun by spreading on a mat in an open space. Then it is mixed with a kind of yeast (Dabai as they call it) and heat it in a closed vessel. (Yeast is purchased from market and is prepared and sold by other community people such as Nepali etc.). After fermentation, it is mixed with maize, wheat or sugercane and heat is again applied in a closed vessel. Thereafter the vessel (earthen) is thoroughly covered up with grass, leaf etc. and kept aside in a cool place for a month or so. "Chee" is generally prepared in winter months (January-February) and kept for use throughout the whole year.

"Chee" is inevitable in all their social and religious functions. It is rather too strong to be taken raw and when a pot of "chee" is given to one of a party, he sips some of it, and hands over the pot round to all the rest.

A few points may be mentioned here about eating manners and customs of the Lepchas and the time for each meal etc. They generally take two principal meals a day, which consist of rice or maize. Maize is usually taken in the form of bread or *chapati*, or boiled like rice, or roasted on fire. Rice is always taken after boiling and they always eat sundried rice. Around 12 noon and at 9 o'clock at night they finish their principal meals. In the morning, before starting for work, they take a breakfast of rice cooked in the previous evening. Variations in the menu are made as and when available. During socio-religious festival days they drink excessive "Chee", often starting from morning at about 7—8 A.M. (when they first gather together) and disperse later and also in the evening (when they again gather for the last time), sometimes uninterrupted. It is a curious sight to witness them drinking "chee" all the day and often in large quantities beyond the imagination of a person from plain area. During these festivals they often take only one principal meal at any time of the day.

They usually take food with their fingers sitting on a "Pira" (a small circular seat made of cotton which is prepared by themselves) on the floor.

There is no hard and fast rule as to who will eat first; children generally finish their meals first and thereafter males and females sit together. No sitting method according to seniority or sex could be observed; on the other hand, old and young, males and females all sit in a hotchpotch way. Before starting the meal, each one offers a small quantity of every item of their food and drink to the spirits, in the way of spreading it round the plate. The food is generally distributed by the female member, usually the housewife, who after distributing all the items to members at a time sits with the same batch.

During a religious function or a community feast. the women and children usually distribute food and "chee". Rice is generally distributed in a plate and every liquid item in a separate pot, thus a number of pots are required for each member.

Cooked food is generally not kept over beyond tweenty-four hours. Fish is preserved for future use by drying or salting mixed mith turmeric powder. The Lepchas do not kill animals during summer or rains and so during this period they use dried meat preserved like fish. Killing of animals during these seasons is tabooed to evade the wrath of evil spirits.

CARE AND DECORATION OF THE BODY

The natural complexion of the Lepchas is beautiful and naturalness is the main feature of their character. They do not use cosmetics or any other artificial means for decorating themselves. The Lepcha women generally feel proud of their beautiful hair and sufficient care is taken to beautify it. A proverb generally runs among them that the females dress their hair only to attract the males. They dress their hair which is braided into two locks like pig tails. The locks are usually tied with silk cords and tassels. Formerly the women after the death of their husband used to cut off their hair locks and this was done in order to distinguish themselves from married women. This custom is no longer in vogue among them at present. Another characteristic feature of the Lepchas is that they do not take bath regularly and seldom use soaps during bathing. Generally "Jhari" (waterfall) or river water is used for bathing purpose (now-a-days tap water is also used). They brush their teeth regularly by finger either with small pieces of branches of trees which grow locally or with charcoal or rocky earth mixed with salt.

Many of the Lepcha women have *Swastika* mark tatooed on their hands, which is mainly done as a sign of decoration and not for any socio-religious reason.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

The general term for Lepcha male dress is "Dom Pra" and that of female is "Dom dyam", but the dress which the Lepcha male generally uses is known as "Pagi" and the Buddhist Lepcha generally wear it. It is a long cotton vesture thrown round the body, leaving the arms free. This dress reaches upto the knee and generally tied round the waist. This simple dress is most commonly used by the Lamas and is generally red and yellow in colour. During winter an upper garment with loose sleeves is added. This "Pagi" is a religious dress of the Lepchas, but in ordinary day-to-day life they use shorts and shirts and footwear (Boot). This is also their working dress. In winter they wear sweater. It was said that in the past they used to wear "Pagi" but now their economic condition does not permit them to do the same. There is no other variation of their dress during winter or rainy season. There is no particular type of dress for mourning period. The Christian Lepchas often wear western type of dresses.

The common dress of a Lepcha woman is a blouse (Tugo) and a lower garment known as "Domdyam" in their language. This "Domdyam" is a piece of cotton cloth worn round the waist like a petti coat. A slight variation of this is known as "Namrik" which is shorter in size. "Domdyam" is used only on special occasions.

The average cost of a male dress is more than that of the woman. "Pagi", the male dress may be had of varied qualities and the average cost of one "Pagi" is about Rs. 40/-. Regarding female dress, "Tugo" costs about Rs. 5/- to 6/- and "Namrik" about Rs. 4/- to 6/-, "Domdyan" costs about Rs. 15/- to 20/-. Some of the Lepchas can prepare these dresses but they are very few in number, so most of them purchase these from market. Often they cannot purchase more than one dress in a year due to poverty.

In old days they used to carry a long knife with a wooden handle which was often found to be hanging by their side. On the left wrist there was a curious wodden guard for the bow string and a little pouch, containing poison. These were mainly used against wild animals as this place was full of jungle in those days. But now-a-days a Lepcha is only casually seen carrying all these weapons excepting during hunting.

The Lepchas generally wear hat during the rainy season. The hat in Lepcha language is known as "Thaktop" which is made up of leaves, attached between two thin frames of bamboo. The hat is quite broad and flat and gives a clumsy appearance. While working in the field they wear "Sambu", a hat made up of bamboo mat.

The Lepchas also use a type of umbrella made up of bamboo mat with a bamboo handle and is known as "Goom" or "Tuku" or "Tuk Tuku".

The Lepcha women are very fond of ornaments. Males are sometimes found wearing rings in their fingers. Women wear silver hoops in their ears which is called 'Neckong' by them. Varieties of necklaces made of cornelian, amber etc. with curious silver and golden charmboxes or amulets (attached to their necks and arms) are used by them. The women wear a typical necklace known as "kow" and its locket is known as "Zu". Necklace made of stone or *mala* is universally used by Lepcha women and is known as "Tho'. A simple type of gold or silver necklace known as "Leyap", is used by a majority of the women. Some ornaments contain little idols, charms, written prayers, or bones, hair etc. of a Lama, some are of great beauty and highly ornamented. All the ornaments are locally available. Some are prepared by Lepcha people. They do not keep their trade within their own people, nor do they hesitate to purchase these from other community people (even when there is a craftsman among themselves). It may be mentioned here that most of the ornaments are only used on a special socio-religious occasion but "Leyap" is an ornament of ordinary daily use.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Lepchas are habitually very lazy, rarely they set foot on a journey outside their own region. They will not go even for a handsome earning to other parts of the country, unless driven by exterme scarcity of food. Some Lepchas occasionally pay visit to nearby places like Sikkim or Bhutan for earnings but not to other places. They travel in bus whenever it is available. Non-motorable roads are covered on foot or on ponny. They are fond of leisurely walking.

To cover a short distance like marketing etc. they go alone but to Sikkim or Bhutan, they go in a batch of at least 2 to 3 persons to avoid any risk of meeting with an accident.

They carry luggage etc. on shoulder or on a basket (Doku or Tung zyang) hanging by a strap-like rope attached to their forehead. Sometimes they carry their children on their back by means of cloth at the time of working or travelling to some places.

They do not often follow the modern methods of communicating their ideas or news to the relatives of remote villages. Urgent news are in these days sent through post and telegraph departments but their traditional method which is still followed although to a limited extent, is that some one carrys the news to some relatives of a nearby village who in turn carry it further onward. In this way they send news in relays to a relative living in a remote village. In rainy season, they are accustomed to send news by means of arrows to a nearby person because they can not cover the road on foot due to slipery nature thereof.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Lepchas have a distinctive way of expressing their artistic tendencies. The materials they use for this purpose are brass, iron, bamboo, beads and silver etc. The traditional Lepcha handicarft is weaving by hand.

There are a few expert craftsmen among Lepchas and some of them depend entirely on carpentry for their livelihood.

Lepchas have an artistic sense and a knack for it. But as enough orders for such work are not always available to them, they are forced to look for other jobs. Now-a-days a limited number of craftsmen (excepting carpentry) can be found among them. Table 5 is a list of the articles produced by them, although to a limited extent.

Table 5

List of handicrafts prepared by the Lepchas:

Commodity produced	*Material used*	*Local name*
1. AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS		
(a) Forked Hoe	Iron	Khanta.
(b) Spade	do	Takshi.
(c) Sickle	Iron and wood	Ban Hoove.
(d) Pick	do	Kana.
2. FISHING ARTICLES		
(a) Trap	Bamboo	Fith.
(b) Basket	do	Chompo.
3. ORNAMENTS		
(a) Necklace	Gold plating, Silver Beads.	Kow, Kheri.
(b) Eartops	Beads.	Charm.
4. DRESS		
(a) Waist Belt	Skin and tin plates.	Ko-chyop
(b) Cap for male	Cloth, feather and Silver	Thyak Juk.
(c) Heavy cotton female dress.	Cotton	Dam ta Gaap.
(d) Waist coat	do	Titli.
(e) Male dress	do	Dom Pra
5. MISCELLANEOUS		
(a) Basket (for day to day use)	Bamboo mat	Tung Zyang.
(b) Sword	Iron or Tin, Wood.	Ban.
(c) Arrow	Iron, Bamboo and Feather.	Chung Hup.
(d) Walking Stick	Iron and bamboo	Po-Patum.
(e) Hat	Bamboo mat	Thaktop, Sambu.
(f) Umbrella	do	Goom or Tuku.

At present the Government of West Bengal is helping the Lepchas with stipends for training in certain categories of arts and crafts. In the Kalimpong Arts and Crafts centre, 40 Lepcha trainees have successfully completed their training course during the period 1960-61-62. But as there is no arrangement for co-operative society etc. these students could not utilise their proficiency.

In Wood-cum-Metal Industry of Kalimpong, 10 Lepcha boys and 5 Lepcha girls have completed their training course in 1961-62 and 5 Lepcha boys are continuing their course during this year (1962-63). In training-cum-production centre at Bom of Kalimpong, 1 Lepcha girl received training in Block printing in 1961-62 and 3 Lepcha girls are continuing their training in the same subject during this year (1962-63). All the Lepcha trainees are reported to be very sincere and efficient by their teachers.

The Lepchas are very proficient in mural art. Their monasteries are well decorated with mural paintings. These paintings depict the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. Prayers are inscribed on these paintings. Mythological stories are also sometimes depicted by pictures in paintings. Some of them can also do sculpture and they are fond of making the sculptures of Lord Buddha.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

A long bamboo flute (Puntong Palit), with four to six holes on its body is the common musical instrument of the Lepchas. They are fond of gossipping and playing in the flute for hours together. The other common musical instruments of the Lepchas are, drums, metal gongs and harp (Tung-Due).

The music and dancing of the Lepchas have been discussed in chapter 7.

DAILY LIFE

The Lepchas divide the day in the following way:

Part of a day in Lepcha language.	*English meaning*	*Time*
1. Lu Krong	Morning	5 A.M. to 12 O'clock
2. Sim Kit	Noon	12 to 2 P.M.
3. Nam Mom	After noon	2 to 6 P.M.
4 Soia	Evening	6 to 8 P.M.
5. Sonap	Night	8 to 12 O' clock.

A short description of the activities of the Lepchas in a day is described below. There may be individualwise variation but the overall profile presented here will facilitate in understanding the people.

Young and old men

Rising as early as the cock crows the people spend a few minutes praying to god sitting on their bed. Then they wash their faces, clean their teeth with twigs of plants or charcoal or rocky earth mixed with salt and finish their nature's call etc. Then they pour water in bowls of monastery or Buddhist altar, if there be any (otherwise they pour water on the ground facing the direction of the monastery). Then they take their breakfast (rice or maize *Chapati,* usually prepared on the previous night) and go fon work in the field at about 8 to 9 A.M. They come back home at 12 noon and take bath and have their midday meal. Thereafter they take rest upto 2 P.M. and again go to work and return at about 6 P.M. Then they take rest and drink "chee" and spend the time leisurely until 8 P.M., when they again have their night meals and thereafter go to sleep at 9 P.M. Those who are too old) to work in the field, do light domestic work at home. Those who are in service, follow a routine life like a man of other community.

Women

Rising at the same time with males, and finishing brushing teeth etc., they attend to feeding the domestic animals and then cleaning the utensils near "Jhora" (the water source) and thereafter (at 8 A.M.) they work in the field or collect the fuel etc. On returning at 11 A.M., they cook food and finish their meals with other male members and take rest. At

2 P.M. when the male members go out, they either accompany them to the field or do domestic work such as cleaning the house and utensils etc. In the evening they spend their time in cooking and gossipping.

Children

The parents wake them up at about 6 A.M. and they finish their washing and brushing teeth etc. Then they take breakfast with their parents. Afterwards they feed domestic animals and help their mother in her domestic work. Those who are students, attend their classes and take meals with their parents at noon. Afterwards they either read books or help their mothers in their domestic work. They take their night meals with their parents and go to bed almost at the same time with them.

The daily activities of the Lepchas have been shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Activities of the Lepchas in a day

Sex	Morning (Lu Krong) i.e. 5 A.M. to 12 O'clock	Noon (Sim Kit) i.e., 12 to 2 P.M.	Afternoon (Nam Mom) i.e., 2 to 6 P.M.	Evening (Sola) i.e., 6 to 8 P.M.	Night (Sonap) i.e., 8 to 12
Males :	(1) Rise when the cock crows (5 A.M.). (2) Wash and brush the teeth etc. (3) Pour water for religious purpose. (4) Breakfast (about 7-30 A.M.). (5) Field work (8 or 8-30).	(1) Bath (2) Meal (3) Rest	(1) Field work	(1) Rest (2) Drink "chee".	(1) Meal (2) Sleep at 9 P.M.
Females :	(1) Rise when the cock crows. (2) Wash and brush the teeth etc. (3) Feed the domestic animals,	(1) Bath (2) Meal (3) Rest	(1) Domestic work or field work.	(1) Domestic work. (2) Drink "chee" etc,	as above.

	(4) Breakfast with Male.				
	(5) Domestic work (cooking food etc. and gathering fuels etc.).				
Children :	(1) Rise when parents call them (about 6 A.M.).	as above	Rest or help the mother in her work and play with mates.	Help mother in her work.	as above.
	(2) wash and brash the teeth etc.				
	(3) Feed the domestic animals.				
	(4) Breakfast with parents				
	(5) Attend school or help the mother in her work.				

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Published literatures dealing with the Lepchas have not discussed in detail their economic system. The policy of the present Government is to provide the tribals with improved amenities of modern life with better facilities regarding farming practices, drinking water, sanitation, housing, medical aid, educational opportunities etc. But before undertaking any plan or programme, it is necessary to gather a sound knowledge on the social and economic systems of the people. For successfully implementing a welfare plan for a tribal community, it is necessary to obtain carefully objective facts and scientific data about them. Particularly with this object in view, the Cultural Research Institute undertook a socio-economic study on the Lepchas of Sindipong village of Kalimpong police station in Darjeeling District, West Bengal. The findings have been incorporated in the next chapter (i.e. chapter 4). The main objective and the design of the survey have already been discussed in the Introduction. The economic system of the Lepchas have been discussed here in brief so as to give a general profile of the system which will be helpful in appreciating this survey.

The economic system of the Lepchas may be grouped into the following five broad categories:

(1) Agriculturist.
(2) Agricultural Labourer.
(3) Daily Labourer.
(4) Service holder.
(5) Craftsman.

The Lepchas are mostly agriculturists, some of whom also carry on fishing and hunting casually. Agriculture may be regarded as their principal source of livelihood. Among the agriculturists, two types are seen viz. (i) high grade farmers who have most of the modern implements and follow the scientific method of cultivation, (ii) farmers of low grade who are very poor agriculturists and resist modern scientific methods in agriculture and the net return of their farm is very low. Most of the Lepchas belong to the second category of farmers. Further this category may be divided into three groups (i) cultivators of land wholly owned or mainly owned (ii) cultivators of wholly unowned or mainly unowned land, and (iii) agricultural labourers without any land.

Work as daily labour (such as, stone-breaking, coolie work etc.) plays an important role in their economic life and is the principal means of subsistence to many of them. A good number of them also depend on handicarfts (mainly on carpentry) as the principal source of livelihood. At present some Lepchas are employed in service, of which teaching and Government services are worth mentioning. They are eager to secure Government service rather than a non-Governmental one, probably due to prestige value and security.

Double or mixed occupation is the characteristic of almost all the Lepchas. Agriculturists generally take to daily labour or handicraft as a secondary occupation. Non-agriculturists take to cultivation as secondary occupation. Secnodary occupation also plays an important role in their economic life.

The economic conditions of the Lepchas in general are far from satisfactory.

In these days of planned programmes their economic condition does not appear to have improved as much as expected. Their income is meagre, and the expenditure often exceeds the income, and for balancing this deficiency of their budget they mortgage their land by '*Kobala*' system, which means that if the money is not repaid to the lender within the stipulated period, the ownership of land would be lost for ever.

DIVISION OF LABOUR IN DIFFERENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The following chart gives an idea about the division of labour in Lepcha society regarding different economic activities.

(Symbols represent shares of work carried by different sex and age groups as follows :
M=by adult males exclusively; Mf=women participate to a limited extent with males; F=by adult females exclusively; Fm=men participate to a limited extent with females; B= by both sexes on same task; Bd=by both sexes on different tasks; C=mainly by pre-pubertal children; Cb=boys only; Cg=girls only; O=activities not present in the culture; I=activities present but insignificant in importance.)
Gathering : of wild roots, plants and fruits (B); of small fauna (M).

Hunting & fishing : of land animals (M); of fishing (Mcb); of wild fowl (M).

Animal Husbandry : herding of large animals (Bd); Care of small animal e.g. pig, dog etc. (BC); care of domestic fowl (BC); milking (Mf).

Agriculture : land clearance (M); preparation of soil before planting (M); planting (Fm); weeding (B); irrigation (M); harvesting (B).

Food preparation : Butchering (M); drying or smoking of meat and fish (B); grain grinding (B); other preparation of vegetable foods (Fm); cooking (Fm); preparation of beverages or indulgents (B).

Extractive activities : mining or quarrying (O); lumbering (M); fuel gathering (BC), water carrying (BC).

Processing of materials : metals (I); Stone (I); wood (M); bone, horn and shell (I); hides and skins (I).

Manufacturing : of weapons (I); of tools (M); of boats (O); of thread and cordage (I); of baskets (B); of mats (I); of nets (I); of textile or other fabrics (I); of clothing (B); of artistic or ceremonial objects (B).
Housing : Construction of permanent dwelling (Bd); erection and dismantling of movable shelters (Bd).
Transportation and Trade : burden carrying (Bd); animal transport (Bd); local marketing (B); intergroup trading (Bd).
Miscellaneous : painting (I); Service holder (M).

ECONOMIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE PEOPLE

The Lepchas have very poor knowledge about the economic value of their activities. In many cases they are found to act irrationally. They don't assess the 'necessity' properly and purchase a thing whenever they have money in hand. As for culivating a particular crop they do not follow any economic plan. In fact there is no systematic planning in their life and activities. The analysis of their family budget will bring forth many anomalies which can often be eliminated by adopting a proper plan.

The above traits are changing now-a-days and they are becoming more conscious of the necessity for economic planning and adjustment but unless they get proper education, guidance and opportunity etc. their economic condition is not likely to be altered satisfactorily.

Being mainly agriculturists the income of the Lepchas is mostly in kind. They do not cultivate cash crops. The income from the livestock is also meagre as they consume a good proportion there of themselves. Still livestock can be a source of decent income to them but the middlemen (of other communities) often deprive them of it. The upkeep of livestock is very low considering that the fodder grows abundantly in this region, not requiring any cultivation. The middlemen usually advance them money, and thereby procure the goods (butter etc.) at a very low cost but the same fetches the middlemen a very high price in the market. The farmers who are lucky to save some of their crops also fall into the hands of these middlemen and suffer a great loss. The people living near urban

डा. टिल्ली रमण रेग्मी
यापी रेग्मी स्मारक
पुस्तकालय

areas earn money by working as coolies or in motor garages as casual labourers. But the people in the interior villages do not get any such opportunity. Sometimes developmental work such as construction of roads etc. brings them casual jobs but these bring only temporary relief to them.

Apart from the low income, the people are spend-thrift in nature. Whenever they get money they spend that lavishly. The drinking of "chee", a home-brewn liquor is a curse to them. The more money they get the more they spend on "chee". Their socio-religious functions also compel them to spend a lot. Each festival, starting from the birth of a baby to the death of a person is a costly affair to the Lepchas. Moreover they are accumistomed to spend a lot on the sacrifice of animals and associated ceremonies in order to appease the evil spirits of whom they are afraid throughout their life.

Though their cash income is very low, their cash expenditure has increased now-a-days. This has made them cash conscious but has also brought an attitude of frustration in them.

The most characteristic feature of the Lepchas is that they are co-operative minded. But lack of proper management capacity and funds often make their condition pitiable, for they rely on the friendship of others and these friends often cheat them by mean tricks, resulting in loss of money, land and other assets. Their economic condition further deteriorates when the above situation combines with their drinking habit.

Another aspect that deserves mention is the existence of a fine economic co-operation between the members of a family. Wife always co-operates with her husband to improve his earnings; children also help their parents in their work but this also interfere with their education; brother helps brother even when they are living seperately (generally they live in a seperate cubicle after marriage); relatives always get help when they are in dire need. This is a relieving feature in the economic condition of the Lepchas though it is very low.

The above gives a general picture of the factors concerned in the economic system of the Lepchas, details of which have been discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY OF SINDIPONG VILLAGE

4·1 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION

Sindipong village is situated within the Kalimpong Khas Mahal Union of the Kalimpong Police Station in Kalimpong Sub-division of the district of Darjeeling and is about two miles from Kalimpong town (which is a developed trade centre with urban facilities like market, municipality, cinema houses, hospitals, high schools, convents etc.). The village Sindipong stands on the Kalimpong-Pedong road. Pedong is about fourteen miles away from this village and is a border town with Sikkim having a marketing centre, health centre, Schools etc. Formerly this border town was used as a halting place by merchants trading between India and Tibet and the trade was carried mainly through this Kalimpong-Pedong road. It is a motorable road having regular bus and taxi services. One has to walk a few yards from this metalled road through hilly tract to reach Sindipong.

THE VILLAGE

The village Sindipong is stretched on the slopes of the hills, in a north to south direction (about 3 miles) and to some extent in east to west direction (about 1 mile). The village is about 4000 ft. above the sea level and its latitude is about 27° N and longitude about 88°25′ E.

The village J.L. number is 44 and is bounded on the north by Dr. Graham's Home, a notable Scholl-cum-hospital for the Leper patients, on the east and west by Pudung and Dongra village respectively and on the south by the Rilli river and with the village Yokpemtam. There are ten 'Jhoras' or hilly rivulets, flowing through this village and meeting in the river 'Rilli'. These water-falls serve as water sources to the villagers. There are a few grocer shops on the metalled road and about half a mile from here, there are some eating houses, vegetable shops and grocer shops and the place is known as 'Tirpai' market. Within a few yards from the metalled road (that is, at the entrance of the 1st village hamlet) there is a 'Gumpha' or Buddhist monastery known as 'Mani Gumpha', a sign board of which is placed on the metalled road.

The cremation ground is situated on the bank of the river 'Rilli'. Though there is a fixed place serving as a burial ground in the village still many of the villagers prefer to bury the dead within the vicinity of their own cultivated land.

There is no systematic or well-dressed lane and by-lane in the village but any convenient hilly track is used as village path.

Sindipong is a revenue unit, under the Block Development area and also known as 'Sindipong Khas Mahal Block'. The village is divided into five hamlets, each of which at the first glance appears to be a seperate unit.

Out of the five hamlets four are multi-ethnic in composition and one dominated by Lepchas and the arrangement of the houses in these hamlets has no fixed pattern. There are altogether 293 houses in this village, out of which 60 belong to the Lepchas. The rest are of Nepalis (majority), Sikkimese Bhutias etc.

HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT

The original inhabitants of this district, the Lepchas, settled in this village from time immemorial. A short history of the settlement of this village as could be gathered from the villagers is given below:

This place was full of 'Sindi' trees (the bark of which was utilised for producing rope) a long time ago and the Lepchas from Sikkim used to visit this place occasionally for collecting barks from these trees. In Lepcha language 'Pong' means place and so they coined the name Sindipong for the village. Later on a few Lepchas took up the profession of rope making and settled here. Although no such trees can be seen in this village now and no one among the Lepchas practising rope making now-a-days, still it seems that in the past Lepchas used to practise this profession. C. De Beauvoir Stocks, in his study of the Lepchas of Sikkim, mentioned that many Lepchas used to produce various types of ropes, baskets, papers etc. from jungle creepers. The original settlers of Sindipong village coming from Sikkim area might have belonged to this occupational group.

Almost all the Lepchas of this village claim that they are the descendants of the original settlers of this village and their fathers, grand-fathers and even great grand-fathers belonged to this village. From the various records of the Mani Gumpha it has been known that the Gumpha was established in or around 1820 i.e. it is about 142 years old. So we may presume that the village might have been formed much earlier than this period.

CLIMATE

The climatic condition of this area is quite similar to that of other places of the sub-division and that of the sub-Himalayan area of West Bengal. The rainfall records of Kalimpong area show that normally there is no rainfall in the months of November, December, and January. There is very little rainfall (varying from 20 to 70 millimetres) during the months of February, March and April. The actual rainy season starts in the area from the month of May-June (when the rainfall varies from 100 to 370 mm.) and continues upto September (between these periods the normal rainfall even rises to 578 mm.). The normal rainfall in the monh of October is about 127 mm.

The temperature is minimum in the month of January (average minimum temperature is 3 to 4 centigrade and the maximum 20 to 23 centrigrade). December, January and February are the coldest months of the whole year and June to September the hotest months of this area (average minimum tempeature is 15.4 centigrade and maximum 29.1 centigrade), April and May are the months with intermediary temperature, the average range of temperature being 11.5° to 21° centigrade during this period.

Thus in respect of rainfall this area is subjected to wide variation but the weather may be divided into two seasons : one cold (December, January and February) and the other temperate (March to November).

LAND

The total area of the village is 1643.97 acres. Not more than 40% of which are cultivable and of this, about half is Sukhakhet or dry land and the other half Panikhet (water logged). The cultivable lands are situated within the boundary of the village. Almost every household of the village has a kitchen garden attached to its domicile. 'Jhoras' flow throughout the whole length of the village, serving as a natural source of irrigation. The land is not very fertile and the soil is deficient in nitrogen and other organic matters.

AGRICULTUAL ENTERPRISES

Aman (paddy) and Marua (Maize) are the two principal crops of the village and grow in 'Panikhet'. Kodo (millet) is a winter crop and grows abundantly in Sukhakhet. Double or mixed cropping is not practised by them. As regards agricultural implements, it has been found out that the village has only 103 ploughs, i.e., 35% of the families possess plough.

The village has a large stock of livestock enterprises. The livestock statistics of this village shows that there are 1 bull and 228 bullocks which are mainly used for agricultural operations. There are 360 cows and 416 goats, 220 calves, 44 pigs and 7 sheeps. Besides these, there are also a large number of poultry birds. Every household, on an average, possesses about 1 bullock, 1 cow, 1 calf and 1 goat. The 44 pigs are only possessed by six or seven Nepali families.

POPULATION

The population records of 1951 census shows that in this village there are 2222 persons, of which 83.9% (1860) are agriculturists and 16.1% (362) non-agriculturists. The distribution of population by livelihood classes has been shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Distribution of population by Livelihood classes, Sindipong.

Livelihood classes	Number of persons	% distribution
(1)	(2)	(3)
A. AGRICULTURAL CLASSES		
1. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependants.	877	39.4
2. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned & their dependants.	349	15.6
3. Cultivating labourers & their dependants.	634	28.9
4. Non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent receivers, and their dependants.	—	—
Total Agricultural classes.	1860	83.9
B. NON-AGRICULTURAL CLASSES		
5. Production other than cultivation	102	4.5
6. Commerce	69	3.1
7. Transport	34	1.5
8. Other Services and miscellaneous sources	157	7.0
Total non-agricultural classes.	362	16.1
TOTAL POPULATION	2222	100.0

*Source 1951 Census.

SCHOOLS

The village has one primary school which is situated by the side of the metalled road. As there is no secondary school in this village or in nearby villages one has to go for secondary education to Kalimpong town. No arrangement for adult education exists in this area.

POST OFFICE AND MARKET

The post office and market are about 2-1/2 miles from this village and situated in Kalimpong town.

WORSHIPPING PLACE

All the Lepchas of this village profess Buddhism and a few persons belonging to other communities also adhere to this religious creed.

The Buddhists have only one permanent worshipping place in the village, known as 'Mani Gumpha' (a monastery). Formerly only Lepcha Buddhists were allowed entry to this worshipping place but now-a-days Buddhists of all communities are allowed to take part in its festival. The Monastery serves as an assembly place for the villagers, centering around which runs the community life. In addition to the people of Sindipong bustee, religious functions and festivities of this Gumpha are also attended by the villagers of a few other nearby villages. The monastery is beautifully decorated with mural paintings, depicting the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. There are two rooms in the Monastery, the front one serves as an assembly hall and the interior one as the worshipping place having a life-size statue of Lord Buddha and also a few other small statues of that religious creed. A row of five praying wheels with prayers inscribed on them has been kept in the outer room. The people come and go, turning the prayer wheels, which signifies that the prayers have been done as many times as the wheel is rotated.

There are no other permanent worshipping place for other religious creeds in this village.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

The Lepchas of this village are successfully running a co-operative society known as 'Krut Tembu'. The people donate Rs. 3 per year and thus make a compulsory saving habit. This society comes forward at the time of any distress and helps the people without taking any interest.

4.2 A STUDY OF THE LEPCHAS OF SINDIPONG

So far our discussion was based on a wide scale embracing all the villagers irrespective of their caste and creed. Now it is proposed to focus the discussion only on the Lepchas of this village.

DEMOGRAPHY

There are 60 Lepcha families in this village, each occupying a separate house. The total population of the Lepchas is 375, of which 208 are males (54.5%) and 167 females (45.5%). The sex ratio of the population is 80 females for every 100 males, whereas the sex ratio of the Lepchas in general is 94 females for every 100 males (according to 1951 census).

The average size of the household is 6.3 (3.5 males +2.8 females).

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION

A comparison of the population in different age groups has been shown in Table 8.

The Table reveals that (i) males predominate in every age group excepting 'Less than 1 and 16-35'. where females exceed males, (ii) The percentage of male steadily increases upto age of 35 after which it falls greatly, whereas that of females increases upto the age of 15 and decreases thereafter, (iii) The highest number of population occurs upto age of 35 which indicates that there is a trend of population growth in future, (iv) If we take 16-55 as productive age group, it shows that a little

Table 8

Distribution of Lepcha population by age and sex.

Age-group	Male		Female		Total		Number of females per 100 males.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Less than 1	3	1.44	5	2.99	8	2.13	167
1-5	32	15.38	16	9.58	48	12.80	50
6-15	69	33.18	52	31.13	121	32.26	75
16-35	52	25.00	60	35.94	112	29.88	115
36-55	42	20.19	27	16.17	69	18.40	64
Above 55	10	4.81	7	4.19	17	4.53	70
TOTAL	208	100.00	167	100.00	375	100.00	80

more than half of the population are in unproductive age-group which suggests that saving capacity is very low among the people, (v) In productive age group females are more than that of males, (vi) The sex-ratio shows that females predominate in Lepcha marriageable age group (16-35) and among the new-born babies (0-1), this is indicative of the future growth of population.

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES BY TYPE AND SIZE

The distribution of families by type and size has been shown in Table 9.

From the Table it is seen that majority of the families (35 out of 60 i.e. 58.3%) belong to nuclear type i.e. consisting of family of procreation (father, mother and unmarried children). The next important family type is the minimal extended consisting of at least one member of family of orientation and members of family of procreation (Father, Mother, Son, Sons' wife and their unmarried children) are 16 out of 60 i.e. 26.7%. There are only few cases of extended

Table 9

Distribution of families by size and type

Size of family	Type of family Nuclear	Minimal extended	Extended	Total	% to total no. of families.
Very small (2-3 members)	6	—	—	6	10
Small (4-5 members)	15	1	—	16	26.7
Medium (6-7 members)	10	10	3	23	38.3
Big (8-10 members)	4	3	6	13	21.7
Very Big (above 10 members)	—	2	—	2	3.3
Total:	35	16	9	60	100
% total no. of families.	58.3	26.7	15	100	

type of families (9 out of 60 i.e. 15%) which is mainly a combination of full-fladged family of orientation and family of procreation (Father, Mother, Father's Brother and/or his wife and children, Ego and his wife with married and unmarried children etc.).

Thus we may conclude that the present-day societal profile regarding family type of the Lepchas is predominantly nuclear type.

It may also be seen from the Table 9 that the major portion of the Lepcha families (39 out of 60 i.e. 65%) of this village have a size of 4 to 7 members (i.e. small and medium sized). Medium sized families (6 to 7 members) top the list with 23 (38.3%) families. Next comes small sized (4 to 5 members) families with 16 families (26.7%) to its credit and the remaining 21 families are distributed as follows—Big sized (8 to 10 members) families are 13 (21.7%) in number; very small sized families (2 to 3 members) are 8 in number constituting 10.0 per cent of the total and the rest 2 families to very big size (above 10 members) with 3.3%.

CORRELATION OF SIZE AND TYPE OF FAMILY

Table 9 also shows the distribution pattern of families by size and type.

Through the Table is self-expressive, still a few words are needed to be mentioned here.

Nuclear type of families mainly falls in small and medium size : minimal extended type mainly in medium size and extended type in big size. Larged sized joint families of the collateral type with self-supporting brother and father living together are very few among the Lepchas of this village.

MARITAL STATUS

The Table 10 gives a detailed picture of marital status (unmarried, married, widowed & divorced) by age and sex.

Table 10

Population by age, sex and marital condition

Age group & sex		Marital condition			Total
		Unmarried	Married	Widow/er	
< 15	M	104 (100)			104
	F	73 (100)			73
	T	177 (100)			177
16-20	M	16 (100)			16
	F	10 (91)	1 (9)		11
	T	26 (96)	1 (4)		27
21-25	M	12 (71)	5 (29)	—	17
	F	12 (53)	10 (43)	1 (4)	23
	T	24 (59)	15 (38)	1 (3)	40

26-30	M	2 (22)	7 (78)	—	9
	F	1 (7)	13 (86)	1 (7)	15
	T	3 (12)	20 (84)	1 (4)	24
31-55	M	1 (2)	41 (79)	10 (19)	52
	F	3 (8)	33 (87)	2 (5)	38
	T	4 (4)	74 (83)	12 (13)	90
> 55	M		7 (70)	3 (30)	10
	F		3 (43)	4 (57)	7
	T		10 (59)	7 (41)	17
Total:	M	135 (65)	60 (29)	13 (6)	208
	F	99 (59)	60 (36)	8 (5)	167
	T	234 (62)	120 (32)	21 (6)	375

The Table reveals that 32 per cent (120 persons) of the population of this village are married, 6 per cent (21 persons) widow (er) and the rest 62 per cent (234 persons) unmarried. Of the married persons about 62 per cent belong to the age group of 31-55, 16.6 per cent to 26-30 age group, 12.6 per cent to 21-25, 8.3 per cent are aged above 55 and a negligible portion are in 16-20 age group. Thus married persons mostly belong to the age group of 26-55.

There are more widowers than widows and most of them belong to the age group 31-55. In this connexion it may be mentioned here that there are only 7 cases of love marriage among the Lepchas of this village, of which 4 Lepcha males married 4 Nepalis of this village. Only 2 Lepchas have married twice, that too, after the death of their first wife.

Table 11 reveals in detail the distribution of the married population by age, sex and age at marriage. The general conclusion that may be drawn from the Table are, stated below.

(1) 21-30 may be termed as the marriageable age of the Lepchas, where 62 per cent of the marriages took place; in other words it may be said that there is a tendency among them of marrying late.

Note : (1) M—male; F—female. T—total

(2) figures in brackets indicate percentages to the total of the sex in each age group.

(2) Early marriage is perhaps disliked by them where only 24 percent of marriages took place.

(3) The people favoured even marrying at a very late age, even at the age of 31-40 where 14 per cent of marriages took place.

(4) A good number of females (47%) married within the age of 20, 44% within the age of 21-30 and the rest within 31-40. But majority (72%) of the males married at the age of 21-30 and very few (9%) married before the age of 20. The reason for marrying at a very late stage by the male Lepchas is mainly on account of socio-economic reasons, the details of which have been furnished in later chapters.

Table 11

Distribution of population by age. sex and age at marriage.

Age at marriage & sex		Age group * 16-30	31-55	above 55	Total
14-15	M	—(—)	2(4)	—	2(3)
	F	2(8)	4(12)	—	6(9)
	T	2(5)	6(7)	—	8(5)
16-20	M	2(17)	2(4)	—	4(6)
	F	15(56)	10(25)	—	25(38)
	T	17(43)	12(14)	—	29(19)
21-25	M	10(83)	17(34)	4(40)	31(38)
	F	9(36)	9(27)	1(14)	19(28)
	T	19(52)	26(30)	5(29)	50(38)
26-30	M	—	21(40)	2(20)	23(34)
	F	—	6(18)	5(72)	11(16)
	T	—	27(31)	7(42)	34(24)
31-35	M	—	7(14)	—	7(10)
	F	—	4(12)	—	4(5)
	T	—	11(13)	—	11(8)
36-40	M	—	2(4)	4(40)	6(9)

	F	—	2(6)	1(14)	3(4)
	T	—	4(5)	5(29)	9(6)
Total :	M	12	51	10	73
	F	26	35	7	68
	T	38	86	17	141

(5) The younger generation (age 16-30) have married within the ages 16-25, but the middle aged group (31-55) married (49%) at a later ages of 26-40 and the old persons (aged above 55) mostly (71%) married at a late age (26-40).

The reason for this variance in different decades has also been stated in detail in the chapter dealing with marriage.

ASSOCIATION OF CLAN AND MARRIAGE

Out of ten clans of the Lepchas, only four are predominant in this village, viz. Songpumu (33%), Fukrumu (18%), Olongmu (18%) and Garlokmu (11%), the rest 20% are distributed in the rest of the clans. Table 12 reveals the association of clan and marriage.

The table reveals that about 92% of the married males belong to Olongmu, Fukrumu, Garlokmu and Songpumu clans but more than 50% of the married females belonged to other clans before their marriages. It shows that mostly married females came from other villages, and most of the marriages took place between the villages rather than within the village.

DEATH RATE :

Death rates during the last five years have been shown in Table 13.

Note : * (1) M—male, F—female, T—total

(2) figures in brackets are the percentage to the total in each age group.

Table 12

Association of clan and marriage

* Clan of the married male	* CLAN OF THE MARRIED FEMALE. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL No.	%
1	—	1	—	2	—	2	—	1	1	2	—	9	15.0
2	2	—	—	3	2	1	2	1	—	—	2	13	21.7
3	1	—	—	5	—	1	2	—	—	1	2	12	20.0
4	5	4	1	—	—	5	3	1	2	—	—	21	35.0
5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.7
7	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.7
8	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.7
9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1.7
10	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1		1	1.7
Total No.	9	5	4	10	2	9	7	3	3	4	4	60	
%	15.0	8.3	6.7	16.7	3.3	15.0	11.7	5.0	5.0	6.7	6.7	100	

Notes : * The serial numbers stand for the clans in order, 1—Olongmu, 2—Fukrumu, 3—Garlokmu, 4—Songpumu, 5—Yoksomu, 6—Simukmu, 7—Tamsangmu, 8—Eribumu, 9—Itonmu, 10—Britmu, 11—Nepali community

Table 13

Death Rate by Sex during 1957-61

YEAR	Death rate per 1000 population Male	 Female	 Total	Death rate of Darjeeling (*) District.
1957	8	8	8	10.6
1958	8	23	16	10.8
1959	16	—	8	n.a.
1960	16	16	16	n.a.
1961	8	8	8	n.a.

Death rate of Darjeeling district during 1957 and 1958 shows that while in the former case the rate is slightly above that of the village's rate, the latter case shows that the village rate is higher than the district's rate. Mortality rate of the females is more or less same as that of the males, except in 1958 and 1959. In the former case the rate is about thrice than that of male but in the later it is nil.

The agewise analysis of the death rate shows that most of the deaths occured in old age i.e. after the age of 55. Then comes the age of 35-54 where a few deaths occured in the year 1958 and 1960. In 1959 60, a few deaths occured below the age of 9.

50 per cent of the deaths occured due to fever, as they call it and the word 'fever' should be taken with reserve and the actual cause of death is not definitely known here. About 29 per cent of deaths occured due to generalised oedema. 7 per cent of deaths occured due to accidents and an equal number of deaths occured from tuberculosis. In 80 per cent of the cases the people consulted 'Bonthing' (Priest) for his magico-religious rites and applied herbal medicines recommended by the village elders and 'Bonthing'. Seldom they consult trained doctors.

---

* Statistical abstract, 1959, State Statistical Bureau,
n. a—not available.

The rate of infant and maternal mortality of the village is negligible.

BIRTH RATE

The crude birth rate (birth per 1000 population has been given in Table 14.

Table 14

Birth Rate during 1957-61

YEAR	Birth rate per 1000 population	Percentage of Male babies to total births	Birth rate of Darjeeling District (*)
1957	46.5	75	25.6
1958	27.1	71	26.1
1959	46.5	50	n.a.
1960	35.0	89	n.a.
1961	15.5	50	n.a.

The Table shows that the birth rate of the village has decreased from 1957 to 1958, after which it again increased in 1959 only to fall steadily in successive years. Thus in 1961 the rate is minimum and the death rate is also minimum in this year. The percentage of growth rates during these years are as follows:

1957	:	3.9
1958	:	1.1
1959	:	3.9
1960	:	1.9
1961	:	0.8

NETT REPRODUCTIVE INDEX

Nett reproductive index (i.e., number of females born to 100 mothers) is 1.5 in this village which suggests the overall growth of population in future.

---

* Statistical abstract, 1959, State Statistical Bureau,
n. a—not available.

REPRODUCTIVE EVENTS

The average ages of husband and wife in different productive stages have been given in Table 15.

Table 15

Age (in years) of Reproductive Stages.

*STAGE	Age of wives Mean	S.D.	Age of husbands Mean	S.D.
Marriage	20.8	1.2	24.9	1.1
First birth	21.3	4.0	25.6	3.8
Last birth	31.8	4.2	36.8	4.1

It shows that the people practise late marriage but the last birth also ends within 40 years of age.

FIRST BIRTH—LAST BIRTH INTERVAL

The interval has been shown in three age groups in Table 16

Table 16

First Birth-Last Birth Interval

Age of Mothers	Mean age interval
<30	6.8
– 45	12.5
>45	12.9

The interval between first and last birth is high in the age of 31 and above, and minimum in age below 30 which is obvious because there is also possibility of other births in this age group. On an average the fertility of women is maximum within 12 years of their marriage.

---

*N is not equal in all cases.

BIRTH INTERVAL

The successive birth intervals have been shown in Table 17. I_1 indicates interval between marriage and 1st. birth, I_2 between 1st. birth and 2nd birth and so on. Pooled mean intervals between successive birth is about 3 years.

Table 17

Birth Interval (in years)

Details	Interval between successive stages.							
	I_1	I_2	I_3	I_4	I_5	I_6	I_7	I_8
Number of Occurence	37	37	28	20	14	8	3	1
Mean Interval in Years.	1.9	3.3	4.0	4.1	3.1	2.0	3.7	3.0

Pooled Mean=3.1

The minimum difference is in I_1 and maximum in I_3 and I_4. The definite reason for this is not however ascertainable.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

The distribution of the adult Lepchas of the village by educational standards has been shown in Table 18. The classification of the educational standards has been made in the following way : Illiterate, able to read only, able to read and write, read upto primary stage, read upto middle school stage, read upto high shool standard, read upto higher secondary stage, matriculate, intermediate and technical.

The table reveals the following facts :

(1) Majority of the people (88.5%) are illiterate and only 5.5 percent fall in the group 'able to read only'. The rest of the

Table 18

Adult Population by Sex and Educational Standard

Educational Status	Adult persons (above 15 years)					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate	86	83.8	89	94.8	175	88.5
Able to read only	7	6.3	4	4.2	11	5.5
Able to read and write	1	0.9	—	—	1	0.5
Upto Primary (Class IV).	2	1.8	—	—	2	1.0
Upto Middle School (Class VIII).	3	2.7	—	—	3	1.5
Upto High School	1	0.9	—	—	1	0.5
Upto Higher Secondary	2	1.8	—	—	2	1.0
Matriculate	1	0.9	—	—	1	0.5
Intermediate	1	0.9	—	—	1	0.5
Technical	—	—	1	1.0	1	0.5
Total:	104	100	94	100	198	100

population (6% in all) have attended different levels of educational courses.

(2) In general, female can hardly be regarded as literate in view of the fact that only 4.2 percent can read only and the rest (except 1) are illiterate. Only 1 female is a trained nurse.

(3) A negligible number of males got education upto different levels, otherwise majority of them (83.8%) are illiterate.

The percentage distribution of adult Lepchas by age and education has been shown in Table 19. The Table shows that the younger generations are more inclined towards education than before. Only an insignificant number of matriculates and middle standard educated people are found in the age group of 36-55. Otherwise the percentage of illiterates has decreased from older generation to younger generation successively.

The distribution of school-going children by age has been shown in Table 20. The Table reveals the following facts :

Table 19

Percentage Distribution of Adult Persons by Age and Educational Status.

	Age Group.				
	16-25	26-35	36-55	Above 55	Total
Illiterate	74.5	91.1	97.2	100.0	88.5
Able to read only	10.5	8.9	—	—	5.5
Able to read and write	1.5	—	—	—	0.5
Upto Primary	3.0	—	—	—	1.0
Upto middle school	3.0	—	1.4	—	1.5
Upto high school	1.5	—	—	—	0.5
Upto Higher Secondary	3.0	—	—	—	1.0
Matriculate	—	—	1.4	—	0.5
Intermediate	1.5	—	—	—	0.5
Technical	1.5	—	—	—	0.5
Total :	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(1) About 60 percent children of the age group 5-10 and 63 perent of group 11-15 are attending schools. The rest of the children have no urge for education in spite of a primary school in the village. The reason behind it, is not only the economic factor but also other reasons such as, lack of the people's apptitude or proper encouragement, absence of good communication and the medium of instruction followed in the school.

(2) Majority of the children complete their primary education within the age of 10 but a good many of them may also carry on the same upto age 15.

(3) Majority of them complete their middle stage education within 15 years of their age, but some of them even carry it on upto the age of 20.

(4) Normally the children attend high schools, between the age 16-20.

(5) Majority (70.6%) of the school-going children of the Lepchas of this village are attending primary classes.

Table 20

Distribution of school-going children by Age.

Fducational Standard	Age Group 5—10 No.	 %	 11—15 No.	 %	 16—20 No.	 %	 Totai No.	 %
Kindergarten	10	21.7	—	—	—	—	10	12.8
Primary (I-1V)	36	78.3	19	71.1	—	—	55	70.6
Middle (V-VIII)	—	—	8	28.9	2	40.0	10	12.8
High (IX-XI)	—	—	—	—	3	60.0	3	3.8
Total Schoolgoing	46	100.0	27	100.0	5	100.0	78	100.0
Total Persons	78	—	43	—	20	—	141	—
Percentage ofSchool going to total persons	58.9	—	63.8	—	25.0	—	55.3	—

LANGUAGES KNOWN

An analysis has been made about the languages known by the Lepchas. The percentage distribution of the same has been given in table 21.

The significant results are summarised below :

(1) Majority of the people (about 72|%) are bilingual i.e., they speak both Nepali and Lepcha and these people are largely distributed over the age group 16 and above.

(2) A few (7.9%) of the people can speak in three languages viz. Lepcha, Nepali and Hindi. The number of females are very few in this group.

(3) Not a single person claims that he knows Lepcha language only, whereas 20.1 percent of the people speak only in Nepali, though they are Lepchas. These people are mostly aged below 15 and consist of both males and females. A few females also belong to this group whose age varies from 16-18. It may be mentioned in this connexion that the *lingua franca* of the Lepchas is Nepali and they do not culture language mainly because of circumstantial reasons and lack of opportunity. Even the primary school follows Nepali as media of instruction and hence the children do not know their own

Table 21

Percentage Distribution of Population by Age and Language Known.

Age Group		Language Known			
	Lepcha only.	Nepali Only	Lepcha & Nepali	Lepcha, Nepali & Hindi	Total
5-15	—	52.4	47.6	—	100.0
16-35	—	2.9	85.4	11.7	100.0
36-55	—	—	87.7	12.3	100.0
Above 55	—	—	88.3	11.7	100.0
Total Male	—	17.7	72.2	10.1	100.0
Total Female	—	22.9	72.5	4.6	100.0
Total Total	—	20.1	72.0	7.9	100.0

language (Lepcha) fully well and they cannot get opportunity of talking in that language with their parents, who generally are habituated to speaking Nepali because the circumstances demand that. The people generally learn the Lepcha language at a higher age.

LAND

Cultivable land per capita of the working force is only 1.34 acre. On an average each family possesses 2.82 acres of cultivated land and 0.06 acre of homestead land. 86% of the families possess cultivable land of I to 3 acres and 2% possess about 9 acres and the rest between 3 to 7 acres.

SEASONAL MIGRATION

Seasonal Migration from this village did not take place last year excepting in one case where a carpenter migrated to Bhutan for four months and saved Rs. 200 (i.e. Rs. 50 per month) from his net income. Inspite of this handsome source of income, the Lepchas are reluctant to go outside their country.

LABOUR FORCE AND WORKING FORCE

Labour force includes all adult persons capable of working (i.e. full workable strength of man power) and working force means those who are engaged in work at present. The statistics of labour force of the Lepchas of this village show that there are 97 males and 94 females, thus bringing a total of 191 persons. Out of these 191 persons, 163 (i.e. 85.3%) belong to working force composed of 95% of the males and 75% of the adult females. The unemployed females do not feel any urge to work because of social and economic reasons. But 5% males remained unemployed without any type of work at all. This is certainly a wastage of labour which can be turned into productive labour. It must be mentioned that all the persons of the working force are not full-time workers and many of them are still looking for permanent work or additional work. The Table 22 shows working force, Labour force, and total population of the Lepchas of this village.

It is seen that the dependants per family are mostly in extended type of families and fewer in other types and on an average equal number of dependants and working members are present in each family.

PRIMARY OCCUPATION

The primary occupations of the working members are agriculture, daily labour, service (clerical, teaching, technical), priest, carpentry, trade (tailoring) and manufacturing of butter and selling the same and different types of bastee work, such as, stone breaking, fuel collecting on daily wages etc.

Males are engaged in all types of work as mentioned above, 55 persons (60.13%) of them are engaged in agriculture, 10 (10.8%) as daily labourers, 8(8.7%) in carpentry work, another 8(8.7%) in miscellaneous bustee work, service holders are 6 in number (6.5%), priest 2(2.1%), trade 2(2.1%) and teaching profession 1(1.0%). 48 females (67.6%) are engaged in agriculture and 23 (32.4%) in miscellaneous bustee works.

Thus it may be concluded that agriculture occupies a prominent place in their primary persuits.

Table 22

Total population, Labour Force and Working Force.

Category	Male	Females	Total
Labour Force	97	94	191
Working Force	92	71	163
Total Population	208	167	375
Total Dependant	111	73	184
Percentage of Dependant.	53.4	43.7	49.1

The working force and dependants per family have also been calculated as follows :

Category	*Working Force per family*	*Dependants per family*
1. Type :		
(a) Nuclear	2.5	2.8
(b) Minimal extended	3.5	2.7
(c) Extended	3.5	3.7
2. Size :		
(a) Very small	2	very small
(b) Small	2	2
(c) Medium	3	3
(d) Big	4	4
(e) Very big	6	5

SECONDARY OCCUPATION

Secondary persuit has a great importance in the occupation structure of the Lepchas. 16 female Lepchas (22%) generally work in one type of work and only 16 females take part in the secondary persuits, of which miscellaneous bustee work comes first (13 i.e., 81%) of the total females take part in secondary work, and daily labour (1), agriculture (1), and trade of milk, butter etc. (1) come next.

Majority of the males (76 i.e., 82.6%) take part in the secondary persuits, of which daily labour comes first with 41 persons (54.0%), then agriculture with 24 (31.6%), miscellaneous bustee work with 4 (5.3%), service with 3 (3.9%), trade with 3 (3.9%) and handicraft with 1 (1.3%) respectively.

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY WITH PRIMARY OCCUPATION

The extent of resort to secondary occupation by the working force will be revealed from the analysis of association of secondary with primary occupation, the figure of which has been furnished in Table 23.

The significant results have been summarised below :

(1) The highest percentage (64.5%) of working force who take part in secondary occupation also for subsistence, have agriculture as their primary occupation.

(2) Daily labourers generally take to cultivation as secondary occupation and agriculturists take up daily labour as secondary occupation.

(3) Non-agriculturists generally take to cultivation as secondary occupation.

SHIFT IN OCCUPATION

There seems to have been a slight trend of shift in occupation in two subsequent generations. In most cases fathers' occupation (agriculture) has been traditionally transmitted to the sons, but in a few cases that occupation has been changed because of circumstantial pressures. Now many people are eager to change the traditional occupation due to circumstantial conditions, such as, higher wages, security, more work etc. Security and financial consideration play the major part for shifting the occupation from agriculture etc. to service, particularly Government services. It may be mentioned here that monetary condition and prestige value play a prominent part in the matter of selection of occupations.

Table 23

Association of Secondary with Primary Occupation

Primary Occupation (*)	Distribution by primary occupation	Secondary Occupation (*) 1	2	3	4	5	6	Total No,	%
1	103	—	37	3	3	—	16	59	64.5
2	10	8	—	—	—	1	1	10	10.8
3	6	2	1	—	—	—	—	3	3.2
4	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.0
5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	31	4	4	—	—	—	—	8	8.7
7	8	7	—	—	1	—	—	8	8.7
8	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.0
9	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	2	2.1
Total No.	163	25	42	3	4	1	17	92	100.0
%	—	27.1	46.0	3.2	4.3	1.0	18.4		

* The serial numbers stand for occupations in the following order : 1—Agriculture, 2—daily labour, 3—service, 4—trade, 5—handicraft, 6—miscellaneous bustee work 7—carpentry, 8—teaching, 9—priest.

OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

A few points that emerged from field observation, are stated below:

(1) Among the Lepchas there are a few full-time workers. Agriculturists do not get work throughout the year. Moreover, the labour force in agriculture is excessive in comparison with the land and capital available.

(2) Daily labourers do not get job throughout the year.

(3) Idle labour is a problem of the day and this is clearly discernible among Lepcha community.

(4) Most of the job-seekers come from agriculturists and this group predominates among the Lepchas.

(5) Most of the people are eager to get job in and around the village.

INCOME

Some relevant points regarding their income are given below :

(1) The average annual income per family of the agriculturists is about Rs. 500, that of monthly service holders about Rs. 1650 and carpenters Rs. 1100.

(2) The average annual income per worker of the agriculturists is about Rs. 230, monthly service holders Rs. 1200, and carpenter Rs. 720.

(3) The importance and significance of secondary presuits have been conclusively established. The secondary persuits fetch almost an equal amount as that of agriculturists. Service holders and carpenters generally take to agriculture as a secondary occupation and earn almost the same amount from this type of occupation as that of agriculturists. The families of carpenters and service holders have on an average one member in the same profession.

(4) Non-agriculturists earn a high amount which allures the agriculturists to change their occupation.

EXPENDITURE

The people spend all the amount they earn. Non-agriculturists sometimes try to save money from their earnings only to spend these on luxurious goods. The agriculturists on the other hand often run with a defecit budget, and in order to overcome the same they take loans and gratis etc. otherwise live on one meal for many days. The percentage distribution of expenses on different goods by occupation has been shown in Table 24.

Table 24

Percentage Distribution of Expenditure

Items	Occupational groups	
M M M	Agriculturists.	Non agriculturists.
I. Agricultural Production.	3.4	3.0
II. Non-Agricultural Items.		
1. Food	78.1	64.1
2. Fuel & lighting	1.8	1.8
3. Clothing	6.9	7.2
4. Education	0.8	4.2
5. Liquor (chee)	6.5	6.4
6 Others	2.5	13.3
Total:	100.0	100.0

CHAPTER 5.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Lepcha society is grouped into three broad divisions. These divisions have originated out of the physical divisions of their country. Two rivers, Rungit and Teesta, springing from Sikkim and flowing in two different routes met at Peshoke near Darjeeling district creating three divisions, one in the northern portion including north-east and north-west known as 'Rinjong', another in the eastern and south-eastern side known as 'Tamsang', the last one in the western and south western known as 'Ilam'. In ancient times, the inhabitants of each of these divisions were considered to be constituting a seperate social organisation by itself. In Lepcha language 'Moo' means inhabitants and hence the people of each division add 'Moo' after the name of each division to denote their seperate entity. Thus these three divisions were named as 'Rinjong Moo', 'Tamsang Moo' and 'Ilam Moo'. The people in ancient times used their surnames as Rinjong, Tamsang and Ilam. But later on they changed their surnames, first after the name of the clan and afterwards after lineage. Even in these days many people have retained their surnames as Rinjong, Tamsang etc. To-day the surname 'Ilam' is hardly found among them as a large portion of 'Ilam' was conquered by Nepal and the people dropped this name from their surnames. Now-a-days a good many males use their surnames as 'Lepcha' and majority of the women as 'Lepchani', whatever may be the name of their clan and lineage.

Of the three broad divisions mentioned above, the social position of 'Rinjong' is said to be the uppermost, Ilam coming next and Tamsang last of all. The 'Rinjong' and 'Ilam' groups would not establish any matrimonial ties with the 'Tamsang' group but marriages are allowed between 'Rinjong' and 'Ilam' and even within the same division. But marriages of 'Tamsang' take place only within their own group.

The position of 'Tamsang' is in the bottom of social hierarchy, because it is said that Bhutan had conquered 'Tamsang' and the people of that region most ignobly submitted themselves to Bhutan and imbibed to a considerable extent their dresses, manners and customs etc. Although now it has been found that the 'Tamsang's living in Darjeeling have closer socio-culture affinity with the Lepchas of the region than with any other community.

CLAN

The clan in Lepcha language is known as 'Agit'. They are internally sub-divided into ten patrilineal exogamous clans, the names of which have been derived from the names of ten brothers who are supposed to be the forefathers of the Lepchas. The names of these ten clans are given below:

(i) Olongmu.
(ii) Fukrumu.
(iii) Garlokmu.
(iv) Songpumu (or, Momusong pumu).
(v) Yoksomu.
(vi) Simbumu (or Simukmu).
(vii) Tamsangmu.
(viii) Zeribumu (or Eribumu).
(ix) Itonmu.
(x) Britmu.

Besides these ten clans there are also a few sub-clans, such as, Kecherchurmu, Sabzamu, Munchangmu, Sinikmu, Sheripucha, Somthermu, Limbumu, Sumutmu etc.

These sub-clans are also exogamous in nature. Further it may be mentioned that most of these clans are found in each of the three broad divisions (Tamsang, Rinjong and Ilam), but the clan 'Tamsangmu' is exclusively found in the 'Tamsang' division and not in the other two divisions.

Marriages are generally avoided with the mother's clan too. Regarding the origin of these few clans there are two different stories as given below :

FIRST STORY

Long time ago, two brothers from Mongolia started for Himalayas through Ladakh. In Ladakh the younger brother, MenSolang, did not like to proceed further for the present and as such the elder brother continued the journey alone. During his journey he had put cut marks on all big trees (Amlim-mat-kum) and cut the upper portion of every banana tree (Kumdum) that had fallen in his way, in order to give to his younger brother (who planned to stay at Ladakh for the time being) an idea about the route followed by him. The younger brother after a few days proceeded towards the indications his elder brother has kept for him but near "Pamir Pass" he somehow lost the track marks and could not trace the elder brother further. So, seeing no other way the younger brother settled there and married a local girl who gave birth to ten sons and these ten brothers are said to be the forefathers of the Lepchas, each of whom was the originator of a seperate clan. Ultimately the Lepchas were scattered from "Pamir Pass" to other regions.

SECOND STORY

The second version of the story regarding the origin of the Lepchas runs as follows. It is said that the God of the Lepchas, "Tak-bo-thing" and his wife "Na-zong-nyu" who were brother and sister gave birth to seven ugly-looking sons. These seven sons killed the newly born eighth son of their parents who was very beautiful looking. The parents out of anger expelled these seven children, who took shelter in Tibet, Bhutan etc. After this, the couple again gave birth to ten beautiful sons who were the forefathers of the Lepchas and they came over from "Kunchenjungha" to Sikkim for settling down and these ten brothers formed the ten different clans of the Lepchas.

It is still believed that "Tak-bo-thing" and "Na-zong-nyu" are living together in the "Kunchenjungha" wherefrom they will come down after 13 generations. That is why they consider "Kunchenjungha" as the abode of God and goddess and worship it.

Formerly, each clan used to worship a seperate peak of the hill i.e. for each clan there was a seperate peak which was named after their clan name and in their socio-religious functions these had some influences.

At present the clan does not play an important role in their social life as in the past, excepting in the regulation of marriage, that is marriage is permitted in between the members of the different clans but not in between the members of the same clan. Now-a-days clan does not exert a good deal of influence on the political and economic life of the Lepchas as in the past.

FAMILY

This is the most fundamental, vital and the smallest social unit of the Lepchas. The societal profile of the present-day family pattern among the Lepchas is of nuclear type i.e., a family consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. Next type of family pattern is the stem-family which is the minimal extended family consisting of at least one member of family of orientation (i.e. Father or Mother) and members of family of procreation i.e. Husband, wife, and unmarried children. The frequency of occurence of the second type of family is very limited in comparison with the first one. The last type of family pattern that is found in Lepcha society, is the extended type which consists of full-fledged family of orientation and family of procreation i.e. Father, Mother, Father's Brother and his wife and children, Ego and his wife and married and unmarried children etc. The frequency of occurence of the last type of family is insignificant in number at present but this pattern was said to be the societal profile of the Lepchas a few generations ago. The extended type of families have passed various phases and finally reduced to nuclear type at present. The reasons behind this may be cited as economic and circumstatial pressures.

In Lepcha society, generally each married couple occupies a seperate room in the house and the husband and wife have the joint responsibility in running the household and earning a livelihood.

Husbands do not quarrel with their wives or vice versa. If there be any disagreement, it is generally settled by the 'Panchayats' or 'Lama' of a 'Gumpha'. Parents generally take the full responsibility of their children but the influence of the grand-father and the grand-mother is also not negligible, (even if they live in a seperate house in the village). Sons and daughters always consult their parents in making decision on important matters. Although after their marriages brothers live seperately, still their relationship is always co-operative and sweet. Brothers always stand by brothers at times of distress. The influence of the father-in-law or the mother-in-law is less over the son-in-law or the daughter-in-law than on their sons or daughters. The adjustment of rights and powers of different members of a household is given below :

(1) Grand Father and Grand Mother: Overall influence over the management of the household.

(2) Husband : Monetary aspect.

(3) Wife : Domestic affairs.

(4) Brother and Sister: Brothers occupy generally higher position than sisters.

(5) Sons and daughters : Helping hands of the father and the Mother.

KINSHIP

The kinship system of the Lepchas of Darjeeling district may be termed as 'classificatory' as the fundamental feature of this system is the application of the same terms for a number of persons, belonging to both lineal as also collateral relationship. Besides the classificatory form, a few denotative terms are also used.

A list of kinship terms of the Lepchas is given in Table 25.

Table 25

Kinship terminology of the Lepchas.

Sl. No.	Terms of Relationship	English Equivalent	Terms of Address
I	II	III	IV
1.	Aba	(i) Father	Apa
	,,	(ii) Step-Father	Apa
2.	Amu	(i) Mother	Mu
		(ii) Step-Mother	Mu
3.	Thikung	Father's Father	Ajou
4.	,,	Mother's Father	Ajou
5.	Nikung	Father's Mother	Maju
6.	,,	Mother's Mother	Maju
7.	Buthim	Father's elder brother	Buthim
8.	Aku	Father's younger brother	Aku
9.	Anu	Father's elder brother's wife	Anu
10.	,,	Father's younger brother's wife	Anu
11.	,,	Father's sister (both younger and elder)	Anu
12.	Ajong	Father's sister's husband (both younger & elder)	Aju
13.	,,	Mother's brother (both younger and elder).	Aju

14.	Anu	Mother's brother's wife (both younger & elder).	Anu
15.	Mathim	Mother's Elder Sister.	Mathim
16.	Anu	Mother's younger sister.	**Anu**
17.	Buthim	Mother's elder sister's husband	Buthim
18.	Aku	Mother's younger sister's Husband	Aku
19.	Ayu	Wife	Amure
20.	Afet	Wife's father	Afet
21.	Anu	Wife's mother	Onu
22.	Ajong	Wife's younger brother	Ajom
23.	Anum	Wife's elder brother	Ajom.
24.	Anom	Wife's elder sister.	Anom.
25.	Ing	Wife's younger sister.	Ing.
26.	Anum	Wife's elder sister's husband	Anum.
27.	Ing	Wife's younger sister's husband	Ing
28.	Anom	Wife's elder brother's Wife.	Anom.
29.	Ing	Wife's younger brother's wife.	Ing.
30.	Avo	Husband	Avore
31.	Afet	Husband's father	Afet
32.	Anu	Husband's Mother	Anu
33.	Anum	Husband's elder brother	Anum.
34.	Ajong	Husband's younger brother	Ajom.
35.	Anom	Husband's elder sister	Anom.
36.	Ing	Husband's younger sister	Ing.
37.	Anom	Husband's elder brother's wife	Anom.
38.	Ing	Husband's younger brother's wife.	Ing.
39.	Anum	Husband's elder sister's husband	Anum

40.	Ing	Husband's younger sister's husband	Ing.
41.	Anum	Elder brother.	Anum
42.	Ing	Younger brother	by name.
43.	Anom	Elder sister	Anom
44.	Ing	Younger sister	by name
45.	Anom	Elder brother's wife	Anom
46.	Neyom	Younger brother's wife.	Neyom
47.	Ajong	Elder sister's husband	Ajom
48.	Meok	Younger Sister's husband	Meok
49.	Anum	Father's brother's elder son	Anum
50.	Ing	Father's brother's younger son	by name
51.	Anom	Father's brother's elder daughter	Anom
52.	Ing	Father's brother's younger daughter	by name
53.	Anum	Father's sister's elder son	Anum.
54.	Ing	Father's sister's younger Son	by name.
55.	Anom	Father's sister's elder daughter	Anom
56.	Ing	Father's sister's younger daughter	by name
57.	Anum	Mother's sister's elder son	Anum.
58.	Ing	Mother's sister's younger son	by name
59.	Anom	Mother's sister's elder daughter.	Anom
60.	Ing	Mother's sister's younger daughter.	by name
61.	Anum	Mother's brother's elder son	Anum.
62.	Ing	Mother's brother's younger son	by name

63.	Anom	Mother's brother's elder daughter.	Anom
64.	Ing	Mother's brother's younger daughter	by name
65.	Tagrikop	Son	by name
66.	Tayukop	Daughter.	by name
67.	Neyom	Son's wife.	Neom
68.	Meok	Daughter's husband	Meok
69.	Bree	Son's wife's parents.	Bree
70.	,,	Daughter's husband's parents	Bree
71.	Akop	Elder brother's son	by name
72.	,,	Elder brother's daughter	,,
73.	Tagrikop	Younger brother's son	by name
74.	Tayukop	Younger brother's daughter	,,
75.	Namkom	Elder sister's son	,,
76.	,,	Elder sister's daughter	,,
77.	,,	younger sister's son	,,
78.	,,	Younger sister's daughter	,,
79.	,,	Husband's sister's son or daughter.	,,
80.	,,	Wife's brother's son or daughter.	,,
81.	Akop	Wife's sister's son or daughter.	,,
82.	,,	Husband's brother' son or daughter.	,,
83.	Kobjong	Son's son or daughter	,,
84.	,,	Daughter's son or daughter.	,,

From the above list it may be noted that the terms used by the Lepchas may be grouped under a few broad kin terms used by them.

The term 'Anum' includes the following relatives—WeB, WeSH, HeB, HeSH, eB, FSeZ, MSeZ, FBeZ, MBeZ.

It is interesting to note here that WeB and MBeZ are termed with same nomenclature. In the same way it may also be noted that WeB and FSeZ are called by the same term.

The term 'Ajong' (Aju) is used for FSH, MB, WyB, HyB, eSH. It may be mentioned here that the use of the same terminology for FSH, MB, and WyB is rather peculiar.

The term 'Anu' is used for FeBW, FyBW, FS, MBW, MyS, WM, HM and the term 'Anom' is used for WeS, WeBW, HeS, HeBW, eS, FBeD, FSeD, MSeD, MBeD, eBW.

The term 'Buthim' includes FeB, MeSH, and 'Aku' FyB and MySH.

The father of wife as well as that of husband is called by a common term 'Afet' and both FF and MF have the common term 'Thikung'.

Another interesting point that may be noted here is that the same classificatory term 'Ing' is applied to denote the members (younger) of both the sexes as illustrated below :

WySH	WyS
	WyBW
	HyS
HySH	HyBW
yB	yS
FByZ	FByD
FSyZ	FSyD
MSyZ	MSyD
MByZ	MByD

From the above classificatory groupings a few deductions can be made out in the following lines.

I. That cross-cousin marriage was probably prevalent among the Lepchas may be deduced from:

(a) Same term used for FS. MBW and WM.

(b) Same term used for WeB, MBeZ, FSeZ.

(c) Same term used for WeS, FSeD, MBeD.

(d) Same term used for WyS, FSyD, MByD.

(e) Stocks, C. De Beauviour in his Folklore and customs of the Lepchas of Sikkim (J.A.S.B, No. XXI: 1925) mentioned that Lepchas used to practise cross-cousin marriage occasionally. The following is a quotation from his article: "but the Lepcha is not allowed to marry his cross-cousin though should one be a widow having no children, the matter could be gone into a council of the village folk who would come together and discuss it, permitting it to take place on occasions" (P. 469).

(f) Among the neighbouring communities e.g., Bhutias, Tibetans etc. MBD marriage is prevalent. Again among the Tibetans marriage of FSD is also practised.

II. That FBD marriage was present in the past among the Lepchas may be deduced from:

(a) Same term used for WM and FBW.
(b) Same term used for WeS and FBeD.
(c) Same term used for WyS and FByD.
(d) Same term used for WeB and FBeZ.

(e) G. Gorer in his "Himalayan village, an account of the Lepchas of Sikkim, London, 1938: p. 146' narrated that FBW marriage was present among the Lepchas. He further stated, "Among the Lepchas the crucial situation arises when a young man lives in the same houses with the wife of father's younger brother. If these two lived in different houses the woman would be a potential spouse for the boy; he would call her 'azong" and would have the right to sleep with her".

(f) Further he stated, "In the case of these relations of a generation above his own—that is to say the wives of father's elder brothers, he also has to know which of these women his father slept with beforehand, for in that case the potential partner becomes permanently forbidden" (P. 153).

That is to say those women i.e. his father's brothers' wives with whom his father did not establish sexual relation may be considered as his potential spouse.

(h) He again commented that in almost every case men had their first real sexual experience with the wife of an 'elder brother' or 'uncle' at an woman's direct invitation and solicitation and this sexual union between the wife of an 'elder brother' or 'uncle' and the ego was socially sanctioned.

(i) Among the Tibetans both parallel cousin and FBW marriages are prevalent.

From the above discussions it may also be presumed that FBW marriage gradually changed to FBD marriage and this is perhaps due to the gulf of difference in ages apart from other considerations.

(III) That marriage by exchange was probably present can be deduced from the following :

(a) FS and MBW having the same term.
(b) FyB and MySH having the same term.
(c) FeB and MeSH having the same term.
(d) FSH and MB having the same term.

(e) Gorer in his 'Himalayan village' also writes about the presence of marriage by exchange among the Lepchas of Sikkim. He says "It is quite common for two siblings of one family to marry two siblings of another, whether it be two brothers marrying two sisters or an exchange of sisters, each brother marrying the sister of the other" (P. 155).

Here it may be mentioned that the above probable deductions are mere hypothetical as these have been derived mainly from the kinship terminologies and supported by early references as no specific cases of this sort have been found in the present field investigation among the Lepchas of Darjeeling district.

Besides the classificatory terms there are a few denotative terms used by the Lepchas such as : Father-Aba, Mother-Amu, Wife-Ayu, Son-Tagrikop, daughter-Tayukop etc.

In the above analysis the following abbreviations have been used. F=Father, M=Mother, B=Brother, S=Sister, Z=Son, D=Daughter, H=Husband, W=Wife, e=Elder, y=Younger.

MARRIAGE

The institution of marriage may be regarded as the central feature of all forms of human society and the composition of family and other functions are closely related with this institution. Marriage has mainly two functions, (i) it is the means adopted by human society for regulating the relations between the sexes and (ii) it furnishes the mechanism by means of which the relation of a child to the community is determined. Owing to these important factors, the institution of marriage needs a closer and detailed study.

LOCAL VERSION OF THE BASIS OF MARRIAGE

The Lepchas believe that it is their duty to marry and keep behind a family of their own. Marriage lock is a sacred thing and the people are not allowed to lead a shameful life. The people are not in favour of early marriage and marriages may only be held when both the partners are fully aware of the sexual utility and the responsibility of a household.

FORM OF MARRIAGE

The Lepchas use the term "Thap" to denote marriages. The general profile of the marriage pattern amongst the Lepchas of Darjeeling district is of the monogamous type, i.e. union of one man with another woman is preferred and is the norm of the society. Plural marriage or polygamous union is non-preferential at the present day. According to Sir H. Risley (Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. II) polyandry, though comparatively rare was not absent entirely among the Lepchas. But our present investigation has totally failed to trace a single case of polyandrous marriage.

TYPE OF MARRIAGE

Negotiation is the usual process of arranging marriage among the Lepchas. Love marriage is also found now-a-days. Many Lepchas have been found to marry girls of Nepalis and vice versa. But in that case the elaborate marriage rites are not followed. The 'Lama' solemnizes their marriages in a Buddhist 'Gumpha'. The society does not object to such marriages and the parents allow their sons to stay at home or near their house. The wife follows the Lepcha customs and the children are reared up according to their norms. Bride price is strictly demanded if a non-Lepcha marry a Lepcha girl with her parent's consent.

Widow marriage was prevalent in the old days but the widow had to marry the younger brother (Junior Levirate) of her late husband whatever would be his age. A widow of 40 years of age in this way often had to marry a boy of 15 years of age. Widow marriage was strictly compulsory and the societal behaviour was in favour of this marriage. If the widow happened to marry an outsider, the brother-in-law usually used to keep the children and claimed the repayment of bride price. In the absence of younger brother preference was given to a junior cousin of her late husband. But under no circumstances she was allowed to marry the elder brother of her husband (Senior Levirate). If no unmarried male member could be found in the family then the widow was ceremonially returned to her father along with a milch cow and half of the property of her late husband. The another half of the property was kept by the members of her late husband's family (preference being towards elder brother of her husband). This ceremony was called "Angap". After this she could marry an outsider without being punished by the society or by returning the bride price etc. This was also applied in the case of a widower. He could remarry but the bride must be a younger sister-in-law or a younger member of his wife's family (in the absence of a sister-in-law). These customs are not in vogue at present. Now-a-days a widow or widower can marry any one of their choice but this choice is restricted within their own society. Societal norm has also changed and widow marriage is the personal choice of an individual.

The remarriage of widowed and divorced persons is not held so elaborately and there is no bride price in this case. The Lepcha term of widow marriage is "Angap Thap". The 'Bonthing' and Lama solemnize their marriages within a few hours after praying to God and chanting hymns. A widow may marry after one year of her husband's death when it is believed that the soul of the deceased has gone to the other world. Today the widow does not generally marry if she possesses children.

It may be mentioned here that at present the Lepchas are mainly divided into two religious groups (i) Christian and (ii) Buddhists, besides a few animists. The Christian Lepchas follow the customs of their religious group, and the Buddhist Lepchas follow the customs of their old days with minor changes which have been discussed here and in subsequent topics.

ARRANGEMENT AND CONSENT

Marriage generally takes place around twenties and child marriage is not the custom of the society. The age of the bride and of the bridegroom may be the same but often it is found that the bride is older or younger by two or three years. A few cases have also been found where bride is older or younger by about ten years or so. The parents generally negotiate with the help of the 'Pibu' or the match-maker and arrange for the marriage, though marriage by self-negotiation by the partners can also be found now-a-days. Both the marital partners are approached by the parents for their consents and equal value is placed on their opinion before the selection of the bride or the bridegroom.

REGULATION

Lepcha marriages are exogamous in nature i.e. Lepchas can not marry within their own clan and marriage is generally forbidden with cross or parallel cousins but are allowed with cousins with some degrees of remoteness.

CONSIDERATION

Formerly bride-price was the main consideration and the groom or his family had to pay a substantial property to the kinsmen of the bride. But now-a-days due to economic hardships the bride price is not so strictly demanded as in the past. Now a groom can pay the bride price in two or three instalments to the parents of the bride. A nett amount of Rs. 60/- with one bull and one pig has to be given as bride-price now-a days. This costly system prevents them from marrying young, as often they find it difficult to save money for the marriage. Marriages are sometimes allowed to take place on credit, the girl remaining in her father's house and the husband living with her till he can pay back the bride price or has earned the money which entitles him to take her home. But this credit system of marriage is generally discouraged by the Lepchas and the people are ready to forego the bride price from the socio-economic points of view.

The other considerations to be fulfiilled in marriage are (a) star observations (astrological) for life, body, etc, such as 'Sok', 'Lie', 'Ongthang', 'Louta', and 'Mear', (b) Birth stars, such as Chika, Nimak, Sunthing, Jijong, Lasheri, Thogal, Dumbal, Gakal, and Gumbal. If the stars of both the bride and the groom are found identical then a happy union is expected. Then the 12-year cycle is consulted of both the bride and groom. It is said that the marriage will be a peaceful one and the couple will be rich if the bridegroom is born in the bullock year and the bride in the rat year. This system is like the adjustment of horoscope of the Hindus and is greatly emphasized by the Lamas. (c) The last factor, that is considered before marriage is settled, is whether any of the forefathers of the bride or the groom either died by suicide or accident, three generations upward from them and any such party is considered unfit for matrimony unless the evil spirits responsible for their death have been pacified.

MARITAL RESIDENCE

The societal profile regarding marital residence is patrilocal, i.e, the bride comes to live normally with or near the husband's kinsmen. A slight variation from the above is nowa-days occuring in Lepcha society where the marital residential pattern followed is "Uxoribilocal" i.e. bilocal after an initial period with or near the wife's kinsmen.

COMMENSALITY

Husband generally enjoys a superior position than the wife, who refers to her husband in high talk. Wife generally remains submissive to him, who generally uses 'low talk' towards her. In spite of the above, the husband always consults his wife in decision-making affairs of the family.

SEXUAL RELATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

Lepchas generally lead a happy sexual life. The husband plays the role of a possessive partner and the wife remains submissive to him. Husband does not force his wife to cohabit during her pregnancy, disease, etc. Both males and females are equal in matters regarding sexual decisions.

DIVORCE

The incidence of occurance of divorce in Lepcha society is very limited and if a married couple quarrel and cannot agree to make up, arbitrators (generally village elders) try to adjust their differences. If, however, repeated attempts to adjust the differences fail then the divorce is effected with the concurrence of the Lama who solemnized the marriage of the pair. The wife returns to her father's house and the husband pays some compensation to her parents. Where adultery is proved on the part of the wife the husband has a right to divorce her without paying compensation to her parents and also takes away the ornaments and garments from her, but if adultery is on the part of the husband then the wife has a right to divorce the husband with due compensation from him. Divorced men or women can remarry according to their own choice. If a woman is childless, then the husband is allowed to marry second time (usually a younger sister of the bride) but they do not divorce each other. After marriage the two wives may live in the same house and the authority of the first wife is more than that of the second.

TIME AND PRIEST OF THE MARRIAGE

Marriage ceremonies are held during day time, starting in the morning after sunrise and ending before sunset, as the sun is regarded as a witness. 'Lama' and 'Bonthing' both attend the marriage as priests. 'Bonthing' usually conducts all the functions while the 'Lama' chants hymns and prays for the well-being of the couple. The parents and 'Pibus' (match makers) are the other witnesses in the marriage.

RITUALISTIC PERFORMANCES IN MARRIAGE

The Lepcha match-maker is known as 'Pibu' whose participation is inevitable in every match making affair. The parents of both the bride (Beuli) and the groom (Beula) appoint 'Pibu's for their sides respectively and they discuss regarding life, birth, and body stars of the bride and the groom on behalf of the parents of the partners. The religious book from which the stars are consulted is known as 'Chemchi' in Lepcha languages. If the Lama gives consent to the marriage, then the 'Pibu' of the groom's side meets the parents of the bride with one 'Khade' or scarf in the presence of the 'Pibu' of the bride's side. If the parents of the bride touches the 'Khade', it signifies their consent in the marriage. This ceremony is known as 'Lagto'. Three days later the 'Pibu' of the grooms' side again visits the house of the bride along with the groom and one of his friends. They bring with them a small pot (pambu) containing five rupees (zer), a leg of bull or hog (Alam) and home-brewn liquor (chee). The present is known as 'Me-ak Pana-al'. At present this "Me-ak Pana-al" includes 2 seers of beef, ½ a maund 'chee', one scarf with 5 rupees for the mother of the bride, and 5 "pambu" each containing 3 rupees for Bride's uncle, maternal uncle, elder brother etc. In honour of the party feast is given in the house of the bride after which all the outsiders leave the house except the groom. This function is known as "Chhamu". The groom stays there for three days and works in the house of the bride like a slave to display his skill with a view to finding favour from his lady love. After these three days, the actual date of the marriage is fixed. The marriage date is fixed by Lama after consulting their calendar, 12-year cycle and religious book. They try to withhold marriages in "Sath Hong Nam" or Tiger year, which is considered as an inauspicious year. After the fixation of the date of marriage the bride and the groom, can freely mix with each other. Marriages generally do not take place in the month of 'Tafa' i.e. May.

On the day of marriage, the bridegroom comes to the bride's house accompanied by relatives, friends and a group of musicians. They bring along with them a large number of presentations, chief among them are (i) glass pot or 'Pambu' (ii) 20 small plates or 'Ladi', (iii) a 'Khade' or scarf with 5 rupees known as "zer" (iv) a milch cow and heifer and sometimes blanket, clothing etc. "Zer" is presented to every senior member of the bride's family. The presentation is known as "Amoo Dam-Dyan" and is handed over to the 'Pibu' of the bride by the 'Pibu' of the groom. Then for a while merry-making with dancing and music goes on. Food and drink are supplied to each of the members present on the occasion. The dish for the bridegroom is prepared with 4 seers of cooked rice, a whole roasted cock and 'chee' etc. The party drinks large quantities of 'chee' on this occasion. This function is known as "Tung-Gung".

In this connection a fine custom of the Lepchas deserves mention here. If any friend or relative of either side behaves in a disorderly way, then the head of the party concerned (bride's or groom's) is fined and the amount is paid to the other party. This fine (usually five rupees for each time) is paid without grumble. This is practised mainly to check outbursts of drunkenness.

After the feast is over, the couple sits side by side wearing a single scarf. A pot of 'Chee' is placed in front of them. 'Bonthing' acts as priest who conducts the marriage ceremony according to animistic ideas and the Lama also prays to God according to Buddhistic idea. Both of these religious functions are held side by side. The priest offers some 'chee' to the forefathers of the bride as well as of the groom upto their seventh generation. Afterwards the 'Chee' is taken by the parents and the couple. Then in the name of God, the bride and the groom chant hymns and thus become husband and wife. This ceremony is known as 'A-Shek' in their language. . Bride price is paid at the time of 'Ashek' and this ceremony must end before sunset.

The last ceremony connected with marriage is known as 'Nom Chum' after which the bride goes to the house of her husband. The couple accompanies the father and mother of the groom and the father and sister of the bride. The sister of the bride stays with her for a few days (not fixed) after which they along with the groom come back to their house. There is no other function on these occasions but the bride finally comes to her husband's house (after four or five days) along with the husband. In this 'Nom Chum' ceremony, 'Padam' or water-carrier full of water, is kept in front of the gate of the house. An old man of the village sprinkles water from the 'Padam' to drive away evil spirits from the way after which the couple starts for the bridegroom's house. On entering the house of her husband the bride is offererd some food by her mother-in-law to show that her taste is not different from that of the son. The mother-in-law (Anu) then receives the bride with silver or brass bangles. The last rite of this function is that the bride carries the fuel (which is placed in the gate of the house) to the hearths of the kitchen, signifying that the bride becomes the housewife of her husband's house from now on and takes charge of the food and other requirements etc. of the household.

From the above description it follows that the Lepcha marriage celebration has five parts, viz. (i) Lagto, (ii) Chhamu, (iii) Tung-Gung, (iv) A-Shek and (v) Nom-Chum. In ancient days it used to take a long time to complete all these functions. But now the marriage ceremony has become a short one. The function 'chhamu' is held after three days of 'Lagto', after which the actual marriage ceremony is held which is known as 'Tung-Gung'. Formerly it took atleast a year or even three years to perform 'Tung-Gung' after 'Chhamu' but now it happens even after a week or so. The function 'Tung-Gung' is a short one, often starting in the early morning and ending before noon, after which the religious side of the marriage or 'Ashek' is held which is completed before evening. Then music and dance go on and the couple takes rest in the bride's house. Next morning the couple returns to the husband's house which is known as 'Nom Chum' and it is completed before evening.

'Ashek' is the real marriage and before this function the couple is not considered as husband and wife. The couple starts their married life from the day of 'Nom chum'.

APPROXIMATE COST IN A MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The groom is required to give presentation to the bride's family twice. The first presentation is known as 'Me-ak-Pana-al' which costs about Rs. 5 in cash and Rs. 50 in kind. The second time presentation costs about Rs. 20 or 30 in cash, which is to be given during "Tung-Gung" function. Apart from these presentations, the groom is required to pay about Rs. 60 in cash and the same amount in kind, as bride price. Thus about Rs. 90 in cash and Rs. 110 in kind are required to be paid to the bride's family by the groom. There is also other costs in the marriage, such as payment to the 'Bonthing' (cock, cow, rice, etc. along with two or three rupees), feast of the marriage etc. Thus three hundred rupees or more is spent in a marriage ceremony. Their poor economic condition stands in the way of their marrying in time and the system of love marriage is gradually taking up the place of the traditional system in these days. Many Nepalis and local people have married Lepcha girls and *vice versa.* The society is now well aware of the evils of their marriage system and the people are becoming economical in money and time. Many of them are now ready to forego the bride price (only a minimal sum is charged) etc. and the glamour and duration of the marriage function have also been substantially curtailed during the last decade. This institution of marriage is expected to change much more within the next few decades.

PRE-MARITAL SEX RELATIONS

Although the Lepchas marry at a fairly high age, still they lead a restricted life. Very few cases of premarital sex relations have been heard of. Generally after the marriage date is fixed (i.e., after the function of 'Me-ak-Pana-al') the two partners can cohabit even before the actual marriage takes place.

and the 'Bonthing' is called for prayers and sacrifices. Hardly they consult doctors. After delivery, the mother is given 'chee', chicken broth etc. on the same day for the reason of her health.

The usual period of pollution is three days, during which period the couple is subjected to the same restrictions practised before delivery. During this period, she is also not allowed to go into kitchen and she is kept in a corner of the room i.e., the wife remains ceremonially unclean for the period. After the birth of a baby, husband and wife do not sleep in the same bed for twenty-one days. This is tabooed from the belief that the child will be lean and thin if they do so. There are no other restrictions imposed on other members of the family excepting that no member can participate in a mourning procession. After the birth of the child, butter is put in its mouth by the mother.

After the end of the pollution period i.e., after the third day after birth, 'Bonthing' (priest) or 'Mon' (priestess) comes and performs a rite known as "Tumbu Fat" signifying the end of the period of pollution. In this ceremony one cock is sacrificed and 'chee' is offered to Lepcha god and goddess (Faronthing and Na-zong-Nyu). The blood of the cock is kept in a vessel and it is scattered round the house so that evil spirits will not enter to do harm to the child. Bonthing then invokes the blessings of the god and goddess for the new born child. Side by side, a Lama also comes and prays to the god and blesses the child. 'Bonthing' then ties a red and white cord on both the hands of the child and puts a cloth round its body so that the child will be a healthy one. After this ceremony, neighbours come with fowl, ghee, milk and two rupees for the child. The father gives a feast on the day. For this ceremony, the 'Bonthing' gets a few fowls, rice or maize and a few rupees (depending on the economic condition of the person). The whole of this function has to be performed between sunrise and sunset.

At the end of the pollution period, the hair of the child is cut by the parents and any elderly male member of the family gives rice to his mouth by means of a silver coin (or rupee). The mother cleans herself by bathing and wearing a new cloth.

NAME-GIVING CEREMONY

On the day of "Tumbu Fat'' or on the third day after the child birth, the 'Bonthing' worships the god and goddess and Lama prays to the 'Lord' for their blessings. Then the Lama consults the religious book and '12-year cycle' (described later) and selects a name which is appropriate for the year, season or day. Sometimes the name is according to a Lepcha month, day or the name of 12 year cycle or to Lamas. Some objects are considered to be sacred for a particular period and the names are also selected accordingly. Then the Lama makes a horosecope of the child and foretells its future. The god is believed to have written the future of the child on its forehead on that day. 'Chee' is offered to God and there-after to all present on that occasion. This ceremony is also held during daytime (between sunrise and sunset).

After this ceremony, a little rice or food is given to the mouth of the baby.

A big sum of money is spent for the ceremony of "Tumbu Fat" and name given ceremony (this is also sometimes called as "Tumgabong" and there is no other local name for it). Music, dancing and merry-making with 'chee' go on for the whole day.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENT

Husband, wife and the child sleep together in the same bed during the early period of their child's life. At the age of 6 or 7 of the child a seperate bed in the same room is generally alloted for him. Daughters do not sleep in the same room with father after a certain age (13 or 14 years) but the sons generally sleep within the room with the parents till they grow up. Brothers and sisters generally sleep in the same bed and in the same room during the early period of their life.

Formerly as the marriage took place even after three years of this date (due to heavy bride price), and the boy often lived and worked in his father-in-law's house like a slave, this sexual relation was not prohibitory to them. The children born during this time were kept by the husband after marriage. If the boy died before their actual marriage, the girl was to have married the younger brother of the boy. The children by her, if any, were also kept by him, who assumed the fathership of the children. But now this system of long waiting has changed and the marriage is over within a day or at best within three days. Apart from this no sort of premarital sexual relation exists among them. In fact, there is little opportunity of free mixing of young boys and girls. Now they get opportunists to meet each other at 'hat', in social functions and love develops between them. If sexual relation between the two is discovered they are asked by Lama to solemnize the marriage with proper bride price etc. (about which also they are not very strict in these days).

LIFE CYCLE

The life cycle of the Lepchas is discussed here with a view to focussing the characteristics at different stages of their life. The descriptive aspect has been stressed more than the analytical in order to bring out the salient features of the life cycle.

PREGNANCY, CHILD-BIRTH AND NAME-GIVING CEREMONIES

The general notion of the Lepchas is that birth usually takes place after a year or so of the marriage. As and when the menstruation stops the woman is presumed to be expecting a baby. From this period onward they count ten months for the birth of the baby. The women, during their pregnancy, do not work in the farm. They however carry on the domestic duties as long as health permits. No strict restriction is imposed on domestic activities. Meat is generally not taken by the pregnant woman (at advanced stage). They also do not participate in killing animals (fowls, cows etc.) nor they cut big trees from the jungles or visit any place which they believe to be haunted by evil spirits. Further the pregnant woman (in advanced stage) is totally forbidden to take the meat of animals whose throat was cut, otherwise the child will die. Distorted plantations are not taken by her because it will disfigure the child's finger. She is even not allowed to take food out of broken pots, nor to go out at night. She is also not allowed to visit a mourning house nor she can cut her nail during the advanced stage of her pregnancy. All these restrictions have been imposed in order to protect the mother and the foetus from evil spirits. The pregnant woman is kept in a hale and healthy condition and is always treated like a sacred object.

On the other hand, there are also some restrictions imposed on the husbands who are not allowed to cohabit with the wives after 5 to 6 months of pregnancy. Husband is neither allowed to cut his nail nor to visit a mourning house or touch a dead body during his wife's pregnancy. He is also not allowed to kill animals during this period. If a woman during her pregnancy dreams of ponds, it is believed she is going to have a daughter and if she dreams of a 'Jhari' or waterfall she will have a son. The birth of a daughter as a first child is considered to be lucky for the parents. The birth of the child usually takes place in the living room of the husband's house and the adult female members of the family or some other elderly woman of the village act as midwife. Husband is also allowed to be present in the room during delivery and he catches hold of his wife.

The wife sits in a kneeling position by supporting on her legs. After delivery the placenta and umibilial cords are kept in a bamboo pot (like a 'chee' pot), covered by leaves etc. and kept tied on a banana or other tree near the house. This is done by the husband so that the crows or other birds may not eat that away. If they do so, evils are believed to befall on the child. The treatment of mother and child is generally done by the grand-father and grand-mother and village medicine man. If any harm arises, it is attributed to evil spirits and the 'Bonthing' is called for prayers and sacrifices. Hardly they consult doctors. After delivery, the mother is given 'chee', chicken broth etc. on the same day for the reason of her health.

The usual period of pollution is three days, during which period the couple is subjected to the same restrictions practised before delivery. During this period, she is also not allowed to go into kitchen and she is kept in a corner of the room i.e., the wife remains ceremonially unclean for the period. After the birth of a baby, husband and wife do not sleep in the same bed for twenty-one days. This is tabooed from the belief that the child will be lean and thin if they do so. There are no other restrictions imposed on other members of the family excepting that no member can participate in a mourning procession. After the birth of the child, butter is put in its mouth by the mother.

After the end of the pollution period i.e., after the third day after birth, 'Bonthing' (priest) or 'Mon' (priestess) comes and performs a rite known as "Tumbu Fat" signifying the end of the period of pollution. In this ceremony one cock is sacrificed and 'chee' is offered to Lepcha god and goddess (Faronthing and Na-zong-Nyu). The blood of the cock is kept in a vessel and it is scattered round the house so that evil spirits will not enter to do harm to the child. Bonthing then invokes the blessings of the god and goddess for the new born child. Side by side, a Lama also comes and prays to the god and blesses the child. 'Bonthing' then ties a red and white cord on both the hands of the child and puts a cloth round its body so that the child will be a healthy one. After this ceremony, neighbours come with fowl, ghee, milk and two rupees for the child. The father gives a feast on the day. For this ceremony, the 'Bonthing' gets a few fowls, rice or maize and a few rupees (depending on the economic condition of the person). The whole of this function has to be performed between sunrise and sunset.

At the end of the pollution period, the hair of the child is cut by the parents and any elderly male member of the family gives rice to his mouth by means of a silver coin (or rupee). The mother cleans herself by bathing and wearing a new cloth.

NAME-GIVING CEREMONY

On the day of "Tumbu Fat" or on the third day after the child birth, the 'Bonthing' worships the god and goddess and Lama prays to the 'Lord' for their blessings. Then the Lama consults the religious book and '12-year cycle' (described later) and selects a name which is appropriate for the year, season or day. Sometimes the name is according to a Lepcha month, day or the name of 12 year cycle or to Lamas. Some objects are considered to be sacred for a particular period and the names are also selected accordingly. Then the Lama makes a horosecope of the child and foretells its future. The god is believed to have written the future of the child on its forehead on that day. 'Chee' is offered to God and there-after to all present on that occasion. This ceremony is also held during daytime (between sunrise and sunset).

After this ceremony, a little rice or food is given to the mouth of the baby.

A big sum of money is spent for the ceremony of "Tumbu Fat" and name given ceremony (this is also sometimes called as "Tumgabong" and there is no other local name for it). Music, dancing and merry-making with 'chee' go on for the whole day.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENT

Husband, wife and the child sleep together in the same bed during the early period of their child's life. At the age of 6 or 7 of the child a seperate bed in the same room is generally alloted for him. Daughters do not sleep in the same room with father after a certain age (13 or 14 years) but the sons generally sleep within the room with the parents till they grow up. Brothers and sisters generally sleep in the same bed and in the same room during the early period of their life.

NURSING AND WEANING

A child is generally nursed by the mother upto a certain age (6 or 7 years). Father does not look after his children during this period. Children are sometimes left to the care of their elder brothers, sisters or relatives. If the mother dies, some relatives or village elder women come and take the responsibility of nursing the child. She nurses as mother and puts the breast in the mouth of the child whenever it cries. Weaning is generally done by putting some medicine on the tips of the breast. Besides giving breast milk, the child is fed with milk by means of spoon upto the age of 2 or 3 and provide with rice etc. after one year of age. There is no socio-religious restriction of giving rice to the child after three days of its birth (but tabooed before that day). Salt is generally not given to the small children as it is believed that their health will deteriorate in that case. The child is also generally not given the mother's milk after one year of its age, from when rice and other foods are taken.

During the early period, the child wears a piece of cotton cloth bound over the shoulder with a bamboo pin. The baby sleeps on the floor wrapped in a blanket and the mother often carries it on her back, suspended with a piece of cloth during her work.

The Lepchas have very few toys of their own. Generally the children play with mud and rock.

If a baby sucks a thumb it is said that he or she is lucky and if cries, then it is considered unhappy.

SEPARATION OF THE CHILD FROM THE MOTHER

A child is generally physically separated from the mother at the age of 6/7 years, whereafter he or she is under the joint influence of both the father and mother. From the age of 10 or 11 years onwards the sons come under the direct guidence of the father, who continues training his sons regarding the society's norms, ideals, behaviour pattern etc.

The daughter generally remains under the mother's control upto the time of her marriage. Thus the personality of a son is moulded according to father's outlook and that of the daughter by mother's outlook. The elderly women like the grand-mother has also some influence on the child. The elders' views are always respected by the Lepchas.

INITIATION ORDEALS

At present no such practice prevails among the Lepchas.

AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE OF THE FATHER

Father is responsible for the education, marriage etc. of his sons and daughters. He is also head of the family, although he consults and is guided by his old father and mother. He is in charge of the running of the family and his authority is fully obeyed by other members of the family. A strict discipline is maintained by the father. He maintains a friendly relation with his children but never makes bad jokes with them. He never cohabits nor makes sexual or light jokes with his wife before his children. He is required to follow a strict routine himself from rising in the morning throughout the whole day, thus setting an example before his children.

SUCCESSION TO THE OFFICE OF THE FATHER

Eldest son succeeds to the office of the father. When the father dies, the eldest son acts as the head of the family and takes up the responsibility of management of the household, marriage of brothers and sisters etc. If the father is a 'Lama' then his eldest son succeeds to the post after his death, so is the case for a 'Bonthing'.

INHERITANCE OF HUSBAND'S AND WIFE'S PROPERTY

Wife has a share on husband's property but she can not alienate it and enjoys life interest over it after the death of the husband. Wife's property can not be claimed by her husband but if she dies childless then her property is bestowed on her husband.

INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY OF THE FATHER AND THE MOTHER

The father's property is equally distributed among the sons. Daughters have a right over their father's property only if there be no son. In that case, the property is equally distributed among the unmarried daughters. Married daughters have no share in the property, unless there be no unmarried one. Even in that case, preference goes (i) first in favour of male issues of the father's brother or brothers, and (ii) thereafter only to married daughters.

If the son dies before his father, his share is bestowed on his sons or daughters (if there is no sons, unmarried daughters come first, then married daughters). If there is no son or daughter of the deceased, then the property is equally shared by his other brothers. The unmarried daughters after their marriages retain their share, if any.

Mother's property is equally distributed among her daughters ; first preference goes to unmarried ones, then to married ones. Sons can only claim their mother's property if there be no daughters. Mother's property is claimed according to the following order of preference :

(1) Unmarried daughters
(2) Married daughters
(3) Sons.

If daughter dies before her mother, her property goes to the daughters of her daughters. If there be no such issues, it goes equally to sons of her daughters and in their absence, the property is claimed by the husband..

DEATH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES

Of the three important events of a man's life-cycle, birth, marriage and death, the first and the second have already been dealt with and now an account of the third one i.e. death is given along with that of the funeral ceremonies etc.

CAUSES OF DEATH

To Lepchas, death is nothing but the seperation of the soul from the body. The common causes of death as believed by them, are diseases and accidents. An accidental death is sometimes regarded to have happened due to evil spirits. The incidence of suicide is almost nil in Lepcha society. The Lepchas believe that the diseases too are due to evil spirits.

CONCEPTION OF SOUL

The soul in Lepcha language is termed "Mak Nyal" and death occurs when this "Mak Nyal" leaves the body. The soul never dies but it leaves the body, and again comes back to this world after a short stay in the other world (heaven). Lepchas believe that the soul has certain duties to perform in this world, but at the same time it has got certain responsibilities in the heaven, towards God, his Creator and for these reasons the "Mak Nyal" visits the heaven after serving the present world. But the soul, after the happy union of so many years with the body, hesitates to leave the body and the earth and hence it hovers round the body after leaving it and if any one tries to do harm to the body or touches his old belongings or if he has any quarrel with anybody while alive in this world, the soul tries to take revenge. For taking revenge the soul looks for a suitable medium which it secures by entering into a living body. So proper rites must be performed at this stage which is usually done by the 'Mon', the priestess (sometimes the 'Bonthing' or priest also partakes in it) along with a Lama. In this connection it may be mentioned that although the Lamas profess Buddhism, still they perform some rites connected with their original religion (animism), due to fear of evil spirits and these are mainly done by a 'Bonthing' or a 'Mon'.

A man who is true to his religion is said to have gone to

'Ramlyang' (heaven) and one who has followed a sinful life goes to 'Mong-iyang' (hell).

BURIAL OR CREMATION

The Lepchas who still profess animism in toto generally bury the dead body but the Buddhist Lepchas cremate it and immerse the ashes in the nearby rivers or tributaries. Christian Lepchas bury the dead and they follow their own Christian religious creed regarding the rites connected with their funeral ceremonies, which need not be discussed here.

PROCESSION

Only adult males of the Lepcha society participate in the burial or cremation procession. Females and children are not allowed to participate out of fear of the evil spirits.

RITES CONNECTED WITH THE DEAD BODY BEFORE CREMATION OR BURIAL

When a person dies, the 'Lama' and the 'Bonthing' are called in. In fact the 'Bonthing' attends the person before his death (i.e., when he is at the point of death) and sacrifices fowl, cow etc. to the evil spirits for the speedy recovery of the person. The person in question is kept without any scientific treatment and only 'chee' is given to him as drink. This megico-religious rite is performed in front of him. As he expries, the 'Bonthing' utters *mantras* and the 'Lama' prays to God for the soul. Afterwards the body is washed with hot water and dressed with the old cloth of the deceased. The Lama consults the religious book and finds an appropriate date for its cremation. The dead-body may be required to be preserved even a day or two for an auspicious moment. During this period, the Lama prays to god and 'Bonthing' continues his magico-religious rites.

On the cremation or burial day, the body is placed on a bamboo cot and carried by two or four persons over the shoulders to the cremation or burial ground. The Lama and the 'Bonthing' accompany the dead-body and the Lama performs the first rite of burial or cremation. In case of burial, the Lama first puts a little earth over the wooden or bamboo box in which the body is covered. In case of cremation, the Lama sets the first fire to the dead-body on its face.

During burning of the dead-body they observe the smoke. If it goes straight towards the sky it is believed that the soul has proceeded to heaven.

RITES PERFORMED AFTER CREMATION OR BURIAL

After cremation of the dead-body, the Lama brings some ashes to the village 'Gumpha'. Some ashes are also taken by the family members to their houses where a 'Bonthing' again performs magico-religious rites. The Lama prays before the 'Lord Buddha' for the peace of the soul, where also the ashes are kept. Both these functions of Lama and 'Bonthing' are continued for four days during which time they notice whether there is any foot-print. If there be any, it suggests that the soul is still in the earth, in which case the 'Bonthing' again sacrifices animals etc. On the fourth day, the Lama carries the ashes to the cremation ground and notices the mark of any foot-print. If there be no print, it suggests that the soul has left this world and in that case the ashes are immersed in the river or tributaries. Otherwise the ashes are brought back to the "Gumpha" and prayers continue for another three days. Thus it is carried on till the 4th day, 7th day, 14th day, 21st day, and 49th day after the day of cremation and they will not immerse the ashes until they are sure that the soul has gone to the other world. If the foot-print of any animal is found in the cremation or burial ground it is said that evil spirit has possessed the soul and something inauspicious is going to happen in the village and in that case 'Bonthing' performs a magico-religious rite by sacrificing fowl etc., on a community basis. The 'Bonthing' immerses the ashes kept in the house after being sure that the soul has left the world (indicated by the absence of foot-prints on the ashes).

On returning from the cremation or burial ground, another ritual is performed which is known as 'Afik'. A bull is sacrificed and its blood is sprinkled in every corner of the house by the priest or priestess in order to guard it from evil spirits. After this a feast is given to the members of the household and those who participated in the funeral procession. The party drinks excessive 'chee'. The behaviour of the participants after cremation is good, there is no physical sign of grief. The family members keep themselves aloof from any enjoyment but they do not express excessive physical sign of grief. They cry but often in a lonely place and drink excessive 'chee' which continues for a week or so.

PERIOD OF POLLUTION AND RESTRICTION

There is no fixed period of pollution and it continues until the ashes are immersed. There is no strict restriction during the period of pollution. They wear the same type of cloth, eat the same thing and go anywhere they like. Some restrictions on food (meat etc.) are observed only for one or two days. 'Chee' is an inevitable drink during the pollution period. The villagers do not take food etc. from the house of the deceased during the pollution period.

PURIFICATION RITES

After the immersion of the ashes, the priest or priestess utters *mantras,* and offers 'chee' to the departed soul. They observe this function on each of the 4th day, 7th day, 14th day, 21st day and 49th day respectively after the death of a person. After the purification rite is over the family becomes ceremonially pure. A ritual is performed by the animist Lepchas in general and also by many Buddhist Lepchas too for appeasing the departed soul. This cermony is usually done by the 'Mon' and performed either in the evening after returning from the cremation ground or in the morning after a week of the cremation. In this ceremony, a 'Mon' (priestess) sits in the room where the death took place by facing towards 'Kunchenjungha' and keeping a knife in her possession, to guard against the evil spirits and a leg of bull for offering to the spirit, she utters *mantras* and calls the soul of the deceased. During this time she drinks excessive 'chee' and every person present in this room also drinks 'chee'. The room is dark enough and as she utters *mantras* for invoking the soul, she falls into a trance and is said to have completely absorbed herself with the soul. It is then said that the soul has entered into her body when the soul takes meat and 'chee' through her and touches all the belongings that were left in the room by the deceased. This is like the 'planchette' and a gloomy atmosphere prevails in the room. It is said that the soul can speak and answer all the questions put to him through the medium of 'Mon'. It is believed that the 'Mon' in this position can speak out many secrets of the deceased or others and can even say where the deceased has kept his hidden tressure, if any. After a few hours, the 'Mon' returns to herself and she asks the soul to leave the present world and go up to heaven (Ramlyang) for ever. She helps the soul to visit the world for the last time and offers him his choicest food, clothing etc. This function often continues for twenty-four hours and is also termed as 'Afik'.

RITES PERFORMED FOR ACCIDENTAL DEATH, CHILD DEATH AND DEATH DURING PREGNANCY

Death from accident is sometimes regarded as an inauspicious thing among the Lepchas. It is believed to have been caused by evil spirits and even marriages do not take place in the family unless the evil spirits responsible for death are properly appeased by the priest or priestess by their magico-religious rites (by offering fowl, chee etc. to the evil spirits). If a man is killed by an animal, it is said next time he will be born as an animal. The deadbody of accidental death is cremated (by Buddhist) and the same rites as before follow in this case.

Though the death from suicide is almost nil still if it happens, it is regarded as an evil sign for the village. To them, man cannot commit suicide unless she/he is governed by some evil spirits. Once the evil spirits get chance to enter the village it will do harm to others. So the same magico-religious rites are performed by the Bonthing as before.

In case of death due to pregnancy, the foetus is seperated from the mother and is buried. The mother is cremated as usual. A child under twelve years is never cremated. The other rites performed are same as before.

There is no seasonal variation among the Lepchas regarding the practices, rites etc. performed in connection with the death or the dead-body.

CHAPTER 6

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Religious beliefs of the present-day Lepchas may be put under three categories:

(a) Animism, (b) Buddhism, (c) Christianity.

(a) ANIMISM

Only a few Lepchas come under this category. They believe that god is almighty (Ramder) and a benevolent deity who does good for the people irrespective of whether he is worshipped or not. The trouble is with the evil spirits who hover around and are responsible for diseases, accidents etc. These evil spirits are to be regularly appeased so that they may not cause harm to the people. Whenever there is any disease, accident or any indication of bad omen, the particular evil spirits responsible for the same, are traced out by the performance of magico-religious rites by the priestess (Mon) and the Priest (Bonthing) who appease these spirits by uttering incantations and sacrificing cow, fowl etc. and offering 'chee' to them.

The animist Lepchas believe that they have originated from the union of "Farong-thing" and "Nazong-Nyu" who, (though brother and sister) live like husband and wife in 'Kunchenjungha', and as such they are regarded as god and goddess and 'Kunchenjungha' as the chief elemental deity. The people regard 'Kunchenjungha' as the heaven or 'Ramlyang' and believe that the soul or life comes from 'Farongthing'' and 'Nazong Nyu'' who decide the sex of a baby before its birth.

They also believe in the existence of two souls, one that lives inside a living being known as ''A-pil'' and the other ''Mak-Nyam' is the soul when it deserts the body i.e., the soul which cannot find a body to stay in this world. 'Apil' lives in this world and cannot move to heaven or hell but 'Mak-Nyam' has the freedom of moving but not to enjoy this world. The soul cannot die, it leaves a body and takes another form (Mak-Nyam) to visit heaven or hell according to its work in this world where too it again comes back. They believe in three worlds viz. heaven (Ramlyang), hell (Mong lyang) and earth (lyang).

(b) BUDDHISM

This religion is still followed by a considerable number of Lepchas in Darjeeling district. The number of Buddhist Lepchas, according to 1951 Census, is 10,099. All of them belong to red cap sect (Nyingmapa) of Buddhism. The people pray in the monastery to 'Lord Buddha', their Supreme Lord. The Lama (Yukmon), the priest performs all religious prayers on behalf of the people and also attends all socio-religious ceremonies of the people, e.g., marriage, death etc. He is the intermediary between the god and the people and every religious function is performed through him. Even in the animistic festivals the Lama's presence is inevitable.

It is to be noted here that although the people profess Buddhism they still adhere to most of their traditional animistic beliefs and practices. In this sense all the Buddhist Lepchas may be termed as 'animistic Buddhists'. They also have magico-religious rites performed with "Mon" (priestess) or "Bonthing" (priest), but Buddhistic rites are also observed side by side.

(c) CHRISTIANITY

At present a good number of Lepchas are Christians (their number was 1950 in 1951 Census) in the Darjeeling district, and they follow their own religious creed. But though they have almost forgotton their traditional religious beliefs and practices, still they could not get rid of all the influences of old beliefs in the evil spirits.

Christian Lepchas belong to the two sects, Roman Catholic and Protestant nearly in equal numbers.

The Protestants arrived first in Kalimpong area and established a church near Kalimpong Bazar, and secured easy access among the Lepchas, mainly due to the backwardness and poverty of the people, standing by the people whenever they were in a precarious situation and helping them with money, food etc. Traditional Lepcha customs necessitated expenditure of big sums of money often dragging them into indebtedness. Christian Missionaries saved them from these expenses by converting them to Christianity and substituting much less expensive Christian religious rites. They also helped the people by spreading education among them as well as by raising their economic standard, and opened here a high school, and a girls school near the church. The Roman Catholic Missionaries came later and established their church near Pedong and later in Kalimpong and also opened school, convent etc. in this region.

RELATIONSHIP IN BETWEEN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS GROUPS

An attempt was made to determine the relationship between the people of these two groups of Christians. The Lepchas after conversion follow the new religious practices seriously and sincerely. This brought them closer to the European influence, which they began to imbibe, leading to a change in habits. dresses and ways of life like other Christians in European style.

But owing to the existence of a definite undercurrent of a silent quarrel between Protestants and Roman Catholics, each group tries to bring over into its fold members of the other group. Socio-religious festivals are not held jointly with these two groups and not even much of social intercourse. Marriage is prohibited between followers of these two churches, and if any one marries outside his church, each group tries to bring him over to its church. After marriage they are allowed to stay in their respective churches but according to Catholic church rules, the children should come to their church. But everything depends on personal choice, so a silent conflict smoulders between these two churches.

Attempts were also made to find out the trend of relationship betmeen Christians, Animists, and Buddhists. It has been noticed that the Christian Lepchas generally live near the church and usually live in a group. A few areas are widely populated by Christians, interspersed by Lepchas, Nepalis etc. professing the same faith. Roman Catholics and Protestants live side by side, but their relationship is more amiable with the members of their own church (Lepchas, Nepalis or others). The Buddhist Lepchas have no objection to mixing with the Christian Lepchas socially or joining their functions, but because of their rather secluded nature they generally remain a bit aloof from the Christians in general who are usually better educated and are in better economic condition, thus enjoying higher position and prestige. In general the relationship between the three religious groups is amiable.

BUDDHIST FESTIVITIES AND THE CONNECTED RITES

The major festivals performed by the Buddhist Lepchas are mentioned below. The most characteristic features of these festivals are the reading of prayers throughout the period of festivals by the Lamas. As soon as one group finishes the prayer the other group starts the same, keeping a continuity throughout the festive period. Besides the major festivals described below, there are also a few other minor festivals but the modes of all these are almost alike. 'Chee' the home brewn liquor constitutes the most important item of the festival and is inevitable in every festive occassion. The 'chee' pot is always held before the Lamas who occassionally take 'chee'; other people also take 'chee' excessively during these days. During festive occasions food is generally distributed by the monastery which runs on peoples' subscription. The distribution of 'chee' and food during these festive occasions is generally made by Lepcha women and children.

BUDDHIST FESTIVALS

The following festivals are performed in every village, in every family and in every Gumpha and every one takes part in it.

(a) *Nam-Ban*:

This is the new year festival and is usually performed in the first week of the month "Kurnyit" (December-January). The Lamas chant hymns in the monastary for a week. The main idea behind the performance of this festival is that no evil befalls on them during the new year, so that they can live peacefully throughout the year. They also welcome and salute the new year through this festival. Even the animist Lepchas observe this festival.

(b) *Ner-Kakyot*:

This is also held in the month of "Kurnyit" in connection with the new year and the people usually wear new clothes to mark the occasion. This is a part of 'Nam-Ban' and is also performed by the animist Lepchas.

(c) *Losar*:

This festival is performed during the first week of Tibetan new year which starts between February and March according to the Tibetan Calendar and continues for a week and is generally held for the same reason as stated above. The Buddhist Lepchas take part in it, although it is not their own festival.

GUMPHA FESTIVAL

The following festivals are performed in Gumphas (monastery) only and only the Buddhists take part in them. The festivals are for praying to Lord Buddha for his blessings. There are three such festivals which are performed five times a year viz. 'Chechu' (twice), 'Mane' (twice) and "In Ten Churup" (once).

(a) *Chechu*:

The festival is performed on the full-moon days, as Lord Buddha was born on a full moon day. The birth day of Lord Buddha which falls in the middle of April (Sum) is celebrated most vigorously, and gorgeously. From the morning till evening the Lamas chant hymns and pray to 'Lord Buddha" for the well-being of the people. "Chechu" is performed in both the full-moon days of Baisakh (Sum), the birth month of Lord Buddha.

(b) *Mane*:

This festival is performed twice in the month of August and september (Purving-Glu). The Lamas chant hymns in the Gumpha for the whole day (from sunrise to sunset).

(c) *In Ten Churup*:

This is usually done in the month of June (Blung) by prayers in which the Lamas take part for the whole day (from sun-rise to sun-set).

ANIMISTIC FESTIVALS

There are six such festivals performd by the animistic Lepchas as well as by the Buddhist Lepchas. The names of the festivals, with the months in which they are performed and their duration have been shown in Table 26.

The names of the festivals come from the names of family gods and each family worships at least one God of the first three and one of 4 and 5.

These festivals are performed in every house and during day time (between sun-rise and sun-set) and continues for

Table 26

Animistic festivals by months

Name of the festivals.	Month of performance		Duration.
	Lepcha	English	
1. Mong Bree Meno	Purving	August	2 days.
2. Mong Bree Jo Sing	“	“	“
3. Navang Gee	”	”	”
4. Khichari Mean	Thon	March	”
5. Cher Meno	”	”	”
6. Chhu Chhu Grum	Not fixed		

about eight hours on each day. The rites of all the five festivals are same, which consist of sacrificing five or six chickens (at least 2 cocks of black colour) and offering 'chee', plantain, fish, egg etc. to the god and 'Bonthing' acts as priest in these festivals.

The last mentioned festival, i.e. 'Chhu Chhu Grum', is done for the well-being of the family. It has no fixed time and each family performs it at least once in his household. 'Bonthing' acts as priest and a pig is sacrificed in this festival. The pig (usually white) after it is born is maintained by the family upto three years. On its birth, it is worshipped before god and is marked by some cord (white or red) tied round its neck. During the period of three years no one will kill or wound it. Even the people of other community are afraid of doing harm to this animal, fearing that evil spirits will catch hold of them in that case. The animal is dedicated to God from its very birth-day and it is killed after completion of just three years of life. The blood is sprinkled round the house and the meat is distributed among the family members as well as among the villagers after completion of the festival.

It has been reported that the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim performs annually a festival (which is like 1, 2 and 3 of the above-mentioned category) smetimes in the month of August-

September by calling a 'Bonthing' from 'Jangu' (place reserved for Lepchas in Sikkim). The 'Bonthing' scolds the 'Maharaja' for a week in a closed room and the latter worships him during this period. This festival is meant for purifying Sikkim from scar etc. and it shows how the animistic belief of Lepchas even influenced the royal family, the members of which are the descendants of Tibetans.

MAGICO-RELIGIOUS RITES

As has already been mentioned, the Lepchas believe in a number of evil spirits (responsible for the evils of the Lepchas), who usually dwell in caves or in hill tops and relish human flesh. They are most ugly-looking but can change their form according to their own wishes and allure the people in various ways so that they may fall an easy prey to them. A few names of these evil spirits are given below :

Songrong Mong, Datmong, Sumo Mong, Ma-Zon, Shom Moongh, Mamoo, Gabu Panoo (responsible for diseases), Sunde Mong (responsible for gastric trouble), Dent Moong (for fever), Ram-doo-Moong (for small pox), Rum-Zon-Pano (of water), Tssu-Mung (quarrel) etc. etc.

Generally the 'Mon' (Priestess) and the 'Bonthing' (priest) offer sacrifices and 'chee' regularly to these evil spirits (who are believed to be satisfied with 'chee' and meat).

BUDDHIST MONASTERY OR GUMPHA

'Gumpha' or monastery is the temple of Buddhist Lepchas' festivals and prayers, around which their socio-cultural and socio-religious life develop. All the Buddhist Lepchas assemble in the Gumpha during 'Gumpha' festivals and participate in its activities. Here they also discuss their social and private problems on these days. The people maintain the 'Gumpha' out of their yearly subscriptions. The 'Gumpha' is usually kept in charge of a head Lama who conducts all the festivals and also performs daily prayer in the Gumpha. Buddhists of other communities of the village also take part in the 'Gumpha' festivals and these festivals are common to all Buddhists of this region. There are about five or six Lepcha Gumphas in Kalimpong sub-division, of which two are under Kalimpong police station. The oldest Lepcha Gumpha which still exists is the 'Mani-Gumpha' in the Sindipong Bustee, established as early as 1820. The other one is the "Bom Gumpha" in Bom Bustee.

LAMA

Lama (Yukmon) is the Buddhist priest who takes an active part in this religious creed. Lamas conduct prayers and supervise the 'Gumpha'. It is generally a hereditary post, the eldest son taking the post of Lama. This post is held only by male members. The Lamas receive their education at Tibetan School. Lama acts as the guardian intermediary of the village and takes part in all the socio-religious activities of the village. This makes him well acquainted with the clan, year of birth, marriage and death of almost all the persons of the village. He is a rich source of information.

The Lama's activity starts from the early morning, when after washing his hands and face he fills the seven bowls with water for food and drink and keep these in front of the Buddha statue in the 'Gumpha', and bows down three times in front of it and chants reverntly the Lamaistic formulas of worship: "Om Mani Pad-Me Hum Chi" (wake up, oh God). This same thing is repeated in the evening when replacing the water, he fills those bowls afresh.

Smoking is forbidden for the Lamas.

BONTHING

'Bonthing' is the animist priest who performs the animistic festivals and sacrifices animals and offers 'chee' to the evil spirits for their appeasement. His formula of worship or magico-religious rites is very simple and contains only a few words. He only scolds the evil spirits with the words of their daily use. The 'Bonthing' can be found in many of the Lepcha villages and this post is also a heriditary one, the eldest son succeeds to the post after getting training from his father. In the absence of sons, a close relative may also hold it but he must be a male member.

MON

'Mon' is sometimes called as "Bijoani" of the animist Lepchas. She can also perform the duties of the Bonthing but there are certain rites which are to be performed by her exclusively (viz, 'Afik'—mentioned in the purification rites after death in chapter 5). This post is also a hereditary one and the eldest daughter occupies it after being trained by her mother. Her formula is similar to 'Bonthing'. People are accustomed to fear her because of her magical power. At present 'Mon' is not found in many villages and there are only two 'Mons' in the Kalimpong Police Station, one in Sangsay and another in Kangibong block (both about 7 miles from Kalimpong Bazar but in different directions).

A FESTIVE DAY WITH THE LEPCHAS

A festive day with the Lepchas has been described here in order to give an idea about the festive mood and the way they enjoy this day. A clear-cut picture of the daily life and activities will also be revealed from the description.

It was still raining when the voice of a few persons awakened us. The two workers of the Settlement Department, Government of West Bengal who happened to stay in the 'Mani Gumpha', a Lepcha monastry, were our hosts. We had to leave our bed as the villagers and many outsiders would be coming to the 'Gumpha' for a religious festival. The day was a full-moon day and the Buddhist festival 'Chechu' would be celebrated here.

The head of the Lamas arrived with a few Lamas in the 'Gumpha' and broke the silence of the morning by blowing the long flute, usually used in a Buddhist monastery. It was only 5.30 a.m. The four Lamas sat before the Buddha statue inside the Gumpha and started chanting hymns from prayer books, one of which each lama possessed.

Leaving the Gumpha for a wash, we met Sri Tashering Ongchyyok, a Lama who was then coming to the Gumpha. He bent his head a little and keeping the left hand on his right, gave us "Khamri" (regards i.e. *Namaskar*) by moving his right hand from below upwards (in a way somewhat similar to the 'Selam' of the Muslims). We also returned the salute in the same way and said 'Khamri' twice.

Sri Dawa Narba, a Lepcha villager, was going to Tirpai market for a few necessary requirements. His nephew was washing his face sitting on the verandah. We sat there at their invitation and were readily served with tea, toast and to our great surprise a double-egg omelette. The taste of the tea was a little uncommon to us and we thought that either a little 'chee' was mixed in it or it was prepared in a 'chee pot'. "Chee" is the home brewn liquor and all the Lepchas would drink it particularly in the Gumpha which would be the meeting place of the Lepchas from far and near. The taste of the omelette was also a little different from what we usually take in town. The omelette was a bit roasted and it was too hard to cut by spoon. No onion or chilli had been used in the omelette.

The wife of Sri Dawa Narba was cleaning the floor of the house and with a little smile she nodded us. Not a furlong far, we found the kitchen and rice was already under preparation. It was only about 8.30 a.m. We asked them what were the items that would be prepared to-day. It was reported that rice, beef and one vegetable curry would be their food that day. As this was a festive day, they would consume beef in a larger quantity than usual. We were further informed that the Lamas who would take part in prayer in the Gumpha, would have their meal in the Gumpha and the food was already in preparation in the Head Lama's House. The house of the Head Lama had been donated by the fellow villagers as he used to perform all the religious rites of the people. There was one Assistant Head Lama who used to act as 'Chief' in the absence of the Head Lama.

Most of the adult male members had gone to work as it was the time of weeding and we noticed two persons working in kitchen-cum-homestead garden. Women were working in their homes but a good number of them took part in cooking the food for guests because many of the villagers would take their food in Gumpha as that was a festive day. The cost would be met from a fund of the Gumpha which was built up from donations received from the Lepchas. We heard that the Government of West Bengal had given a grant-in-aid for renovation of this Gumpha.

'Mani Gumpha' is beautifully decorated with mural paintings. The paintings have been done by Lepcha painters who used to live in this village.

Throughout the mid-day the chanting of hymns continued and it ended at about 3 p.m. One or two persons were continuously coming to the Gumpha till the evening. Sounds of flute and chanting of hymns were always heard without interruption. Some were coming and moving the prayer wheel which was in the Gumpha in a series of four to five. The prayer was written in it in Tibetan language and script. The number of times the wheel moved round indicated the time the winder had prayed.

At about 2 p.m. when most of the Lamas arrived and a stream of Buddhists mostly Lepchas and a few of other communities came they took part in a community dinner. They were served with rice, a large quantity of beef and one vegetable curry. 'Chee' was distributed at the end of the dinner. It may be mentioned here that the distribution of 'chee' was started from the morning and continued till the late evening. The distribution was carried out mainly by children and women.

The Lamas who were continuously chanting hymns inside the Gumpha were served with 'Chee' and in between their prayers they drank the same.

At noon when many of the Lepchas met, they gossipped and killed the time until the dinner was over. Many of them left after dinner by exchanging 'Khamri' with each other.

Head Lama acted as host and he was a worthy host as named in Scriptures.

Evening rolled down. We were about to go for a walk in Kalimpong when the Ador Tshering Lepcha asked us to wait a bit as he would also be accompanying us.

Kerosine lantern was lighted in many houses. The house-wife of Ador Tshering Lepcha served us a cup of tea. With Sri Ador Tshering Lepcha we left the place and having gone a few steps we found some ten to fifteen Lepchas, a few of whom were Lamas, discussing their social problems. All had drunk too much and although they did not behave in a rough way their eyes were red and all the symptoms of drunkenness were apparent on their faces.

From Kalimpong we returned to the camp at about 9 p.m. The village was quiet and most of the people were preparing for a good sleep. The day which started at 5-30 a.m. ended at 9 p.m.

LEPCHA CALENDAR

The Lamas generally know about the details of the Lepcha Calendar which is given below :—

I. Days in a Lepcha Calendar :

Days according to Lepcha calendar.	Days according to English Calendar.
1. Mesaiak	Sunday
2. Unsaiak	Monday.
3. Loug Saiak	Tuesday.
4. Nen Saiak	Wednes-day.
5. Sakmat Saiak	Thursday
5. Faith Saiak	Friday.
7. Panjen Saiak.	Saturday

Note :—'Saiak' means 'day' in Lepcha language.

II. Months according to Lepcha calendar.

Months according to *Lepcha calendar.*	Months according to English Calendar.
1. Kurnyit Nyom	December-January
2. Karsong Nyom.	January-February.
3. Thon Nyom.	February-March.
4. Sum Nyom	March-April.
5. Num-Kum Nyom	April-May.
6. Tafa Nyom	*
7. Blung Nyom.	May-June.
8. Num chum Nyom	June-July.
9. Purving Nyom	July-August.
10. Glu Nyom	August-September.
11. Ith Nyom	September-October.
12. Ra Nyom	October-November.
13. Mar Nyom	November-December.

* The month 'Tafa' is an intercalary month and enters every third year in Lepcha Calendar.

The months are calculated by moon which they allot usual(12 to the year. The moon is called 'Lavo' but the name of a month is termed 'Nyom'. 'Laonyet' added once every third year to regulate the lunar months with the solar month. It always occurs in the month of 'Num-Chum' and the inter-calary month is called 'Tafa'.

12-Year cycle : Another interesting feature of the Lepcha calendar is the presence of a 12-year cycle. The details of the cycle are given below.

Name of 12 years in Lepcha language	English meaning of each year.	Significance of each year.
1. Clock Nam.	Rat Year	Preserve.
2. Long Nam.	Bull or Bullock year.	Peace.
3. Sath Hong Nam.	Tiger Year.	Hot-tempered
4. Kam thong Nam.	Eagle Year	High-minded

5. Sader Nam.	Lighting year	Short-tempered.
6. Bue Nam	Serpent Year	Mean-minded
7. Un Nam.	Ponny horse year	Active
8. Lok Nam	Lamb Year	Meek.
9. Suhu Nam	Monkey Year	Restless.
10. Hick Nam.	Fox Year	Reserved
11. Kuzu Nam	Dog year	Alertness.
12. Mon Nam.	Pig year	Lazy.

"Nam" in Lepcha language means 'year' and the 12-year cycle moves clockwise, for example, 1961 was the "Long Nam" which signified a peaceful year. Then comes 1962 on "Sath Hong Nam" which is a 'hot-tempered year' and the Lepchas consider this year as an evil year. They try to avoid doing auspicious work during this year, for example, marriages usually do not take place in this year. Then comes 1963 or "Kam thong Nam" which is a very good year for the Lepchas. In the same way "Bue" is considered a bad year. The rest of the years are in general more or less good to them. The significance of these years plays a great role in their life and activities and in general all their activities are guided by this twelve-year cycle. The Lamas prepare the horoscope of a person after consulting this cycle and studying the situation of the stars, the description of which are given below:

STARS

Like the astrological stars of the Hindus, the Lepchas also believe in life and birth stars. A person is guided throughout his life by these stars and by reading the position of these stars they try to foretell the future. During marriage and other important occasions, consultations are always made about the positions and influences of these stars.

The five life-stars are as follows:

(i) Sok, (ii) Lie, (iii) Ongthang, (iv) Louta, (v) Mear.

The nine birth-stars are as follows :—

(i) Chika, (ii) Nimak, (iii) Sunthing, (iv) Jijong, (v) Lasberi, (vi) Thogal, (vii) Dumbal, (viii) Gokal, (ix) Gumbal.

CHAPTER 7

DANCE, MUSIC, TALES AND PROVERBS

The materials presented in this chapter would give an idea about the traditional dances, music, mythological tales and legends and folk tales and songs etc. of the Lepchas, who have still retained a fairly good stock of these ancient characteristics of their culture and tradition.

DANCE

Dancing is almost a part of the Lepchas' life. They express their joy, and various other emotions through these dances. Although these dances are now dwindling day by day, still the Lepchas of the interior villages often dance on a community basis. There is no fixed time for dancing but usually after harvesting or in socio-religious festivities (such as, marriage, name-giving etc.) they express their joy with dance and music. Sometimes they continue their dances for the whole night. But they never dance on funeral occasions or even in the village where a death has occured on the day. A short description of their dances are given below:

Lepcha dances may be brought under six broad groups : (a) Dances after nature (b) Agricultural dance, (c) War dance, (d) Historical dance, (e) Mysticism dance (f) Mythological dance.

(a) *Dances after nature* :

Nature's dances may be of different types. Firstly, it may purport to be an imitation of beasts, plants and insects. When an insect flies it is said to rub first its hind feet together once, then its front feet together once, after which it moves to the right, rubs its feet together, and then moves to the left and rubs its feet together and so on. The Lepchas also dance in a similar way immitating the insects. The two hands serve as front feet and legs as hind feet. In this dance a continuous clapping sound together with the sound of the musical instruments accompanies the dance. They have also dances imitating movements of deer and other animals etc.

Males and females of all ages dance together accompanied with chants in unison with the music of their instruments, flutes, drums and metal gongs. Sometimes a dance is held in imitation of insects, beasts and plants together. In this dance, the male costume is multicoloured hand woven cloth, wrapped round their body and both the ends knotted on the left shoulder with a pin made of bamboo, leaving the right shoulder bare and tied with a sash round their waist. This is like 'Pagi', an ordinary dress of the Lamas. Another piece of maroon-coloured long scarf is put round the neck and shoulders, the hands reaching down to the ankles. A fine cloth is worn round the head on which long, rich and beautiful feathers are placed. The girls wear the costume of their every-day use but of better quality and gayer colours. Hairs are dressed in circulets round their head making them like parted tail of the bird called 'chahem Fo'.

(b) *Agricultural dance* : *'Zo Mal Lok'* :

There are five main agricultural operations (viz, ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting and threshing) for the cultivation of main crops. The period of each operation has some characteristics of its own. As for example, the people look upward for rain during ploughing ; sowing is a time when 'chakdoon' and cuckoo birds appear in this region, a few kinds of insects appear during weeding making a continuous 'Dwee' 'Dwee' sounds ; harvesting brings a number of birds pouring their sweet sounds to the ears of the field workers ; and lastly threshing (of rice) in winter gives them smile and joy and the nature is also gay and beautiful. During each operation the people sing in chorous and dance imitating the nature of the respective period. A group of young men and girls move in a line and join hands on their back side, singing at the same time in chorous. Three steps foward, then balance on first foot, then three steps backward, balance on the first foot again, and then all turned to their left and so on. As dance proceeds the rhythm and time measures increase and reach a very high pitch and the whole form becomes a thrilling experience. Verses are short and tune is in a higher key. Some one starts the song by repeating a verse, the whole company then sings that verse twice in chorus, again one repeats another verse, the whole company repeating it twice in chorus again and so on it goes until the last verse when the music stops for a moment and the dance reaches a high pitch. After singing all the verses, they utter a beautiful musical note for a few minitues and then it stops. This dance often goes on all the night, one group takes rest followed by another and so on. While taking rest, 'chee' is an essential drink to them. Only adult males and females take part in this dance.

(c) *War dance—'Fen Lok'*:

Only adult males take part in this dance. Swords, shields, bows and arrows in hand they dance together forming two groups. In this dance they take the help of imagination and displays of attacks and counter-attacks take place between the groups. Four steps forward and four steps backward is the usual stepping of this dance and at intervals they cry "Aya Ho Ho" "Aya Ho Ho" in chorus. Drums provide the battling music. A good physical power and stamina are required in this dance involving jumping, body throwing and bending in a roundabout way, in order to depict win, fall, death, etc.

(d) *Historical dance* : *'Pasya Lyon-Guru-Tak'*:

This is also an action dance like war dance. Historical events are depicted through these dances. Adult males and females take part in this dance. One such dance is described here. In ancient times, the Lepchas defended themselves from the attack of Bhutanese at Daling fort (36 miles away from Kalimpong, now in ruins). The Bhutanese attacked them vigorusly and the Lepchas defended them all the while sacrificing a good number of lives. This has a reference to the tragic historical event at Daling fort connected with the life of Gaebu Achook, the lord of Tamsang. This will be described in Lepcha folk tales. That historical event has been depicted in this dance programme. A group of young men in dance defends a tree (Symbol of Daling fort) and another group attacks the same. Fair maidens from the back of the tree keep up their spirits of fighting by singing songs. The girls move only the upper part of their bodies but the men dance like war dance.

(e) *Mysticism dance—'Yaba Lok'* :

'Yaba' denotes a type of Lepcha mysticism. It is like going into another world, after which one can tell the secrets of this world and secrets of the other world also can be given to this world. Generally young girls take part in this dance. One girl after dancing a while, gets into a trance (i.e. in Yaba). She closes her eyes and makes such a smooth and calm bodily movement as if she is not a person of this world. A group of girls comes dancing step by step to her and makes a circular movement around her, and while continuing the step-by-step dance puts questions to her in song. She on the other hand sings in a sweet voice but with a long musical note and foretells the future and secrets of this world, all the while making a trembling movement of her body.

This dance sometimes takes the form of fabulous dance when the girl in 'Yaba Lok' tells the people of this world the news of the heaven, their fascinating life and glamour, and brings blessings from them. Thereby the whole group become joyous and start dancing enthusiastically again.

(f) *Mythological dance* :

In these dances the mythological stories are depicted through dances. Males and females take part in such dances. One such mythological story is that of 'Rungeet and Rong-nya (Teesta)', which has been rendered into a fascinating dance drama.

The two rivers (Rungit and Teesta) springing from Sikkim meet at Peshoke in Darjeeling district from where they flow together to the plain areas. In a Lepcha folk tale, it is said that 'Rungit', a boy loved 'Teesta', a girl but were driven away by parents who disapproved their union. Their friends, partridge and snake, advised them to leave the place and partridge guided 'Rungit' and snake guided 'Teesta' in their bight. Finally they met and married at Peshoke. But 'Teesta' arrived at Peshoke early and 'Rungit' was late. He reasoned with 'Teesta' that the partridge being restless guided him in a zig zag way. But the girl would not hear and repeated the complaints. So the boy was coming back when the girl began to woo him and promised that the people would forget his late arrival if he would flow over her. Hence 'Rungit' flows over 'Teesta' at Peshoke. In the rainy season, it can be clearly seen that the mud-coloured water of 'Rungit' flows over the 'Teesta' at this junction. The folk tale has been dramatised in a Lepcha dance. In this dance they are divided into four groups, one with young men representing the river 'Rungit', one with young women representing the river 'Teesta', one with boys representing partridge and the last one with girls representing the snake. Two elderly persons (male or female) represent the guardians. The group representing partridge stands in a line with one hand on the hip and the elbow to the rear to represent the bird's tail, while the other hand is raised to the forehead with the first finger bending a little and pointing foreward to represent the beak of the bird. The group representing snake stands in a line with one hand stretching backward to represent the snake's tail, while the other hand stretching foreward with all the five fingers bent a little raised up from the wrist and pointing forward to represent the hood of the snake. The group representing 'Teesta' wears white clothes and bent a little forward and each holds the back of other with her hands. Sometimes they dance in a row by moving four steps forward and two steps backward. Sometimes they dance in a column with the same steps. The group representing 'Rungit' wears 'pagi' with feather head dress and dance in the same way like 'Teesta'. There is a close amity between these two groups. They dance in a rhythm and a few men and women sing in chorus narrating the tale. The birds dance in a zig zag way and

'Rungit' follows them. The snake dance on the opposite side but in a straight line and 'Teesta' follows. This dance often continues for whole night, starting in the evening.

FOLK SONGS

Lepchas are forgetting their folk songs day by day. The people are not so serious about their own folk songs which are gradually being replaced by songs of other communities, the influences of which on the Lepchas can be easily detected from their present mode of singing. The Lepchas never sing on funeral occasions, even would not sing in a village in which a death has occured on the day. Some idea about the nature of Lepcha folk songs can be had from the following list. Lepcha folk songs can be classified into four groups :—

(i) Love songs (*Gó-Ung-Sá-Vám etc.-a* lover's appeal to his fiance).

(ii) Comic Songs (*Thén-Ung-Sá-Vótm e.g.—A* caricature of the odds of others).

(iii) Lamenting songs (*Yú-Muksá-Vám*—lamentation over a loss).

(iv) Ceremonial songs (*e.g. Femre-Sá-Vám*—prayer to god).

In addition, there are also songs for agriculture, war, etc., some of which have already been mentioned in connection with Lepcha dances. Two agricultural folk songs are given below :

(i) *Chak Doon Doon Fo* :

Nam Toohat lat non ne, chak doon doon,
Mong zo pat to chat ka, „ „ „
Ka arfo lik-Kang sa, „ „ „
Gram gram pat gat shyo, „ „ „
Kyo kacher tyat tachat, „ „ „
An Ore lat non gong, „ „ „
Tachat ore Ka, „ „ „
Hing book thyang gat shyo, „ „
Chang-ka ak-yot at-yong „ „ „
Arenum matlunge, „ „ „

(The sowing time of millet, barley and wheet has come. The pigeons cry and it is required to make life lively. The millet and barley will give added vigour and so be quick with the sowing).

(ii) *Chya-nya-nya* :

Payong sa akong ka, chya-nya-nya,
Ore ka ho lom markhan gong, " "
Kasum ore ka lom yong, " " "
Pomut potong sa, " " "
Abong ho tyat markhan gong, " " "
Kasam tyat bo youngli shyong, " " "
Hik book anok num " " "
Boom markhan na gong, " " "
Kasam ado tandok boom, " " "
Afar agyap sa dam, " " "
Ho ore dem myan gong, " " "
Go adom dem bo yong, " " "
Chee sa tafyep, " " "
A sa ho lok makahan gong, " " "
Kasam do nyet bo yong, " " "
Shyang pak sa thyakam, " " "
Salom do tho shyong myam na gong, Chya-nya-nya,
Kasam do the be yong, " " "
Shyangpak sa thyakam, " " "
A ka ho da manan gong. " " "
Kasam do nyet yong, " " "
Nam bu dum atong, " " "
A thya num kap makhan, " " "
Go do thya bo yong, " " "

(If you cannot cut the bamboo or walk on it, shall I do it for you? If black fowl cannot hatch, shall I do instead? If you cannot wear the coarse and heavy cloth, shall I wear instead ? If you cannot prepare 'chee' (home brewn liquor), shall I show you the way? If you cannot move the wooden block, shall I do it instead ? Shall I show you how to sleep on that wooden block? If you cannot wear the woolen blanket, shall I wear instead ?)

It is a pity that such interesting cultural assets of the Lepchas like these folk songs, dance, dramas etc. are fast deteriorating and would before long be irretrievably lost unless proper and vigorous steps are taken to foster, revive and encourage them. Of the factors responsible for this decay may be mentioned : very low economic condition along with much increased struggle for existence, lack of education and consciousness about the worth and value of their own cultural assets, lack of proper scope and encouragement and possibly lure of cheap grade songs etc.

A few years back a party of Lepcha males (Sonam Tshering and La Tshering of Darjeeling) and 2 females (Khar Sangmut and Nimkit Lepchani of Kalimpong) formed into a group of Folk singers who toured different areas and were very much appreciated, but unfortunately the group disbanded and no further attempt appears to have been made for reviving such organised moves.

It is high time now for adoption of suitable positive steps to revive, foster and encourage folk song and folk dance parties and other cultural organisations. The authorities of the newly-created Kurseong Radio Broadcasting Station may also try to adopt suitable measures in this respect. Well-trained and organised folk song parties may also be arranged to be sent to Delhi Annual Meeting of Folk Songs etc. on the Independance day celebrations etc.

LEGENDS AND MYTHS

There are a good number of traditional mythological tales and legends etc. prevalent amongst the Lepchas talking about the creation of the earth and man, origin of the Lepcha people etc., some of which are narrated below :

(a) *Creation of the earth* :

The universe was at first full of water and there was no life on it. Seeing this pitiable condition of the Universe the Supreme Lord (It Mo) made an earthen pot and floated it over the water by supporting it by means of a snake. Long after that a green thin layer was found to be visible on the earthen pot, which later on turned into grass and foliage and ultimately trees grew up. This earthen pot later on became the land or the earth and from the green foliage etc. birds were created first by the Supreme Lord.

(b) *Creation of Man* :

On the earth there was plentiful of land and the birds were the only living creatures. Seeing that the trees were becoming bare and birds were dying due to want of proper care, the Lord at last created man. The first Man was created out of butter and then stone was inserted in it, to make it strong. The butter made up the flesh and the stone the bone of man. But man cannot live without blood and so water was made to circulate through the body which became blood. The water of heaven is of red colour hence the blood is of red colour. Then other essential materials were inserted into the body to keep the body running smoothly. The materials that were inserted later into the body, became entrails, veins etc.

The first man was sent to the earth and he lived by hunting birds. To save the birds from the hands of this first man God created a woman in the same way as the man. The man began to live with her. As a result of their union, human beings multiplied in number and filled up every corner of the earth. The serpent who was engaged by the Supreme God to support the vessel became revengeful for this rapid human growth and he threw the earthen pot into water. Due to this, the world was flooded and only the peak of the 'Kunchenjungha' was above the level of water where only 'Farong-thing' and 'Nazong-nyu', the first man and woman took shelter. The God became annoyed with the serpent for this action and killed him, then made the earth totally dry. After this He sent two rivers from Hymalayas to meet the needs of the human beings.

(c) *Origin of the Lepchas* :

'Farong-thing' and 'Nazong-nyu' (who are regarded as brother and sister) somehow saved themselves from the flood of the earth, and they began to live in the same house (i e. Kunchenjungha). 'Nazong-nyu' had a dog for her watch and 'Farong-thing' used to come to her room every night and had sexual relations. After sometimes 'Nazong-nyu' gave birth to a number of children, all of whom were devils. These devils became the animals who were scattered throughout the world. God enquired about the fathers of these children but no one replied. Then the dog gave out the information and God became very glad for its behaviour and ordered that men would always maintain dogs. Then he advised 'Nazong-nyu' not to live with 'Farong-thing' when they were staying at the top of 'Kunchenjungha. But they did not listen to the advice of God and as a consequence eight sons were later on born to them. The first seven were very ugly looking and the eighth son was very beautiful to look at. The seven ugly looking sons out of jealousy killed the beautiful looking eighth son. Due to their misbehaviour they were expelled by their parents and they thereafter took shelter in other parts of the world.

Then 'Farong-thing' and 'Nazong-nyu' prayed to God for their misbehaviour in not listening to God's order and the God ultimately became glad and bestowed his blessings upon them. After this they again had ten sons who were beautiful and these ten brothers came to live in the world, decending from 'Kunchenjungha'. These ten sons are regarded as the forefathers of the Lepchas and 'Farong-thing' and 'Nazong-nyu' are respected by them as God and Goddess. The Lepchas believe that 'Farong-thing' and 'Nazong-nyu' are still living on the top of the "Kunchenjungha" and that is why they consider them as God and Goddess and "Kunchenjungha" as their chief elemental deity.

A second story also runs side by side regarding the origin of the Lepchas which has already been stated while dealing with the origin of the ten types of clans of the Lepchas.

(d) THE ORIGIN OF THE LEPCHA PRIEST, 'BONTHING'

The devils overpopulated the earth and men were continuously troubled by them in the shape of diseases, accidents, etc. God sent 'Bonthing' from heaven (Ram) to save the mankind from their evil hands. 'Bonthing' brought with him some herbal plants from the heaven and planted these on the earth. But these medicines could not serve as effective cure for man, as the devils were constantly beseiging the man. 'Bonthing' employed his magical power and out of fear of this, an agreement was made by the devils with the 'Bonthing', that the devils would leave the body if 'Bonthing' or his representative offers them sacrificed animal (bull) and 'chee' on behalf of the people. The blood of the animal must be kept in a vessel and its skin on earth during this rite. To be sure of their (evil spirits) vow, the 'Bonthing' asked them to spit on a stone which broke, then on a lake which dried, then on a tree which fell down. Thus the 'Bonthing' became inevitable for Lepchas' magico-religious rites. "Tikkum (old) Tek (man)" is the first 'Bonthing' and "Nikung (old woman) Nyal (lady)" is the first 'Mon'.

(e) LUNAR ECLIPSE

The brother and sister (sun and moon) used to live in heaven like husband and wife. Once a big tiger of 'Ram' (heaven) swallowed the moon (the sister) but 'Tak-bo-thing', the God stroke the tiger in his belly with sword. Moon came out from the tiger's stomach but the tiger did not leave her and was always after her.

This hide-and-seek game continued for ever and this is the reason why lunar eclipse occurs periodically.

(f) WAY TO REACH HEAVEN (RAM LYANG)

Formerly the people were very ambitious and they cherished the idea of reaching heaven. They were called 'Naong' (i.e. ignorant persons). To this end they started making a tower out of earthen pots. Day after day the tower of pots had risen higher and higher. God at first gave no attention, but the men's enthusiasm and progress of towering at last forced him to make the people foolish, and he played trick by making the men deaf. The people could not hear each other's voice and as such when the men on top asked the men at bottom to supply pots (kok-Vim-Yang-tab), the latter heard it to take away the pots from bottom (Chek-ta-la). The people at the top again repeated the same but the latter heard it as before. Then the people at the top were very angry and they said yes, yes (Ak, Ak) and the latter took away the pots from bottom. In this way the tower had broken down and the enthusiasm for reaching the heaven with the help of tower melted away. The tower broke and came down forming three hills, 'Kaijalay Bhanjyan' in Karmi Estate, 'Maney Bhanjyan' in Relling Estate, and 'Phedap Bhanjyan' in Ilam (Nepal). The tower was erected on the meadow of 'Tal-Lom Par-Tam' (the meadow from where the upgoing road starts) in Sikkim north, and even today a few indication of it can be seen there. It is said that many 'Mons' (priestess) are living there.

(g) THE SUN

Once there were two suns (who were two brothers) on the sky and the world used to become too hot due to their scorching rays. Somehow one of the suns was killed by a toad (Tuk-blo-Ta-luk) but the other brother became sad and in order to hide his sorrow he used to hide himself under dark and as a consequence the world used to become dark which helped to grow many a worm and pest. A bat took the courage and tried to make the sun happy by caricature. The sun laughed and the darkness disappeared but the bat got burnt by the light of the sun. So the bat becoming blind cannot live under the sun and his movement starts after nightfall. It is also sometimes said that the name of the Lepcha months were given in memory of the dead sun.

(h) THE LEGEND OF MOUNT TENDONG

Mount 'Tendong', as the Lepchas call it is 8,613 ft. high and can be seen from Darjeeling and its English name is Mt. Ararat. This mount is near Kalimpong and on Sikkimese side. It is said that once the whole world was flooded except the peak 'Tendong' (who is male) and his sister

'Manom' (which means hidden or disappearing sister and this peak is situated just by the left side of 'Tendong'). The flood water was increasing and the brother and sister were also lifting their heads, but at last the brother was also flooded, the sister remained above the water level. When the water receeded, the brother was ashamed that his sister remained unconquered but he being a male could not resist the water. Hence the brother bent his head in order to salute the sister. Even today, they believe, one can see Mt. Tendong like a man stands bending his head towards his sister. 'Manom'. This legend has found a place in Lepcha folk dance and music.

(i) THE RIVER 'RUNGEET' AND 'RONG-NYA'

This story has been narrated in connection with the mythological dance. Some more information is added here. These two rivers, springing from Sikkim meet at Peshoke (near Darjeeling). The word Peshoke means jungle (Pe-Zok=Peshoke). When the boy 'Rungeet' found his lover 'Rong-Nya' arrived before him, he exclaimed 'Thista' (meaning already arrived!) or 'Teesta'' and hence 'Rong-Nya' is known as 'Teesta' now-a-days.

(j) STORY OF 'NAM BONG PANO-ONG-FO' (THE KING OF BIRDS) AND THE RAT

The king of bird, 'Nam Bong Pano-ong-Fo' (Latin name of this kind of birds is Edolins paradiscus) and the rat were great friends. The two friends once decided to dress their tails with varieties of feathers of peacock and other birds. They did the same but the bird was so much burdened that he became slow to move and he used to live at a lower height. The bird also became lazy. Seeing this condition of his friend, rat wanted to kill him. From that day the rat has always been runing after the bird to kill him and the bird is flying from the rat. These two animals will never sleep in same place and the bird flies at night whenever it wakes up, fearing that the rat is after him.

(k) TWO BROTHERS

Once there were two brothers, the elder being rich and the younger poor. The elder brother did never look after his brother and spent his days with his friends. The younger brother lived separately and did never get any help from his elder brother, who used to hate him instead. Once the elder brother was joking with his friends sitting on a tree. The tree fell down and the elder brother was wounded. But his friends left him, saying why should they waste time after him, they have other business. The younger brother was working in the field and as soon as he heard of his brother's pitiable condition, he rushed to attend to him and saw him cured. From that day the Lepchas learnt that brothers always stand for brothers and hence their feelings for brothers are much more than towards friends.

(l) WILD BOAR AND TIGER

The tiger and the boar challenged each other and the former took the help of suggercane and the latter mud. The boar threw the mud but the tiger was saved as he was hiding inside the sugercane forest. But the tiger gradually ate all the sugercane and as there was no other way he behaved like a dead one. The boar finding the tiger dead, fell asleep. Then the tiger struck him with the root of the sugercane. The boar fled away and after two months the tiger finally killed him with a bamboo. Hence it is said that tiger eats the wild boar, but he cannot catch it unless he bides time and watches the boar for two or three months.

(m) THE SAMBUR (SACHI) AND THE MONKEY (SAHU)

They were two great friends and once they decided to exchange their tails. As soon as the sambur gave his tail to the monkey, the latter jumped up on a tree and ate the tail of the sambur. Sambur's tail is good and tastes like liver, hence the people relish it as well as the flesh of monkey because it deceived the sambur.

(n) THE MONKEY AND THE STORK (KU-DONG-FO)

The monkey and the stork were great friends. One day they challenged each other to shout louder. Both of them shouted loud but the stork asked the monkey to catch hold of a branch of a tree and then shout loudly. As soon as the monkey shouted, holding the branch of the tree, he fell down in mud and could not rise. A leopard was passing that way when the monkey requested the leopard to raise him from the mud so that the latter could eat him. The leopard took him out of the mud and as he was going to eat the monkey, the latter asked him to make him dry by placing on a stone so that the taste will be sweet. The monkey being seated on a stone invoked the wind in his own language and spoke to the leopard that he was doing so only to make himself dried quickly. After invoking a few more times, the bamboo trees bent by the gust of wind and the monkey caught hold of a bamboo tree and fled away. In this way the monkey gave an eyewash to the leopard, but from that day they became enemies.

(o) AN ORPHAN BOY

Once upon a time there was an orphan boy who had lost his mother and father and came to his maternal uncle (Ajong) for shelter. The uncle gave him 'chee', 'Zo' (rice) and 'Dum' (clothes) and told him to graze his cattle. One day the boy had lost one cow and his uncle did not give him food. So the boy went away and slept over a tree. After a few hours he found a big giant and he pretended to have died. The giant carried the boy to his house and kept him inside the room, for feeding on him afterwards. As the giant went away the boy looked over the room and found gold etc. He brought gold with him and became rich. The uncle finding his nephew to have become rich, enquired everything from his nephew. The boy being a simple fellow, told the uncle everything. So the uncle one day went to the same tree and slept and pretended to be dead when the giant came. The giant carried him but the uncle could not continue pretending and hence the giant thought he had stolen the gold and killed him on the spot.

(p) GAEBU ACHOK, THE LORD OF TAMSANG

The Lepchas believe that this is a true story and connected with their unwritten history. In long long past, the Bhutanese attacked them but the Lepchas under the leadership of Gaebu Achok defended their country. The Lepchas were overpowered but they finally started to defend Daling Fort (36 miles away from Kalimpong, now in ruins). The Lepchas were at last able to defend them and took a lead to counter attack. The Bhutanese were forced to make a treaty. But the Bhutanese tried to kill Gaebu Achok, because only then they could conquer Tamsang. One day one Bhutanese General accompanied by two of his assistants paid a friendly visit to the Daling fort. They brought with them a large quantity of liquor and a great feast of meat and liquor went on there. The people became drunken and started sleeping deeply, even the guard fell asleep. Then the Bhutanse General killed Gaebu Achok part by part and threw all the parts of his body in different places. In the morning the guards woke up and could not find their leader nor the Bhutanese and at last repented for their foolish act. But Gaebu Achok's heart was still alive and hence he invoked God for reassembing his body. Different parts of his body were being concentrated at one place, when one Bhutanese saw this affair and he immediately reported to his General, who again started butchering different parts. But as they cut the leg, the hand came back, as they cut the hand the head came back, and finally they threw each part in deep water of the river. Different parts of his body floated away in different places. Thus Gaebu Achok died. After the death of Gaebu Achok, the Bhutanese conquered Tamsong and came in this district in a large number. But the spirit of Gaebu Achok always annoyed them and created many mishaps. Many businessmen while coming from Tibet or Bhutan were reported to be caught by the spirit of Gaebu

Achok who sometimes killed them. So the Bhutanese while entering this district used to appease the spirit near the border of Kalimpong (Pedong). Even now if any one is in a trance, it is said that the spirit of Gaebu Achok has caught hold of him and so 'chee' and sacrificed animals are required to be offered to the spirit for its appeasement. It has become a yearly feature of offering to the spirit and before starting the annual exhibition at Pedong, the management (Bhutanese, Nepalese and Lepchas too) starts by making offering to the spirit.

Gaebu Achok is known as the 'Tamsang bird'.

SUPERSTITIONS AND PROVERBS

The Lepchas still have faith in many superstitious ideas and give much value to some acts and behaviours and try to connect them with some other things. Some examples are given below:

1. If a dog howls thrice continuously with a slight break and in a tone like that of a fox, then it is believed that some one is going to die in the village.
2. Dreams of a dead man of the family gives an indication that the soul will return again to his or her family.
3. If a pregnant woman dreams of animals in her sleep then it is believed that the child will die.
4. A piece of 'Nyot' tree should not be brought into the 'bustee' which means some one will die from that area.
5. Before milking cows, a few drops are to be thrown on the earth as offering to evil spirits.
6. In the month of Sum (April, when they usually take 'chee' newly prepared), a small quantity of 'chee' should be scattered on the floor for the 'Mung' (evil spirits).
7. In case of diseases, if a dog's skull (or one prepared by straw) is hung over the door, then it is believed that the sick person will be cured soon.
8. No one sits on a threshold but it should be stepped over.

9. Daughter-in-law never carries burning wood into the room, otherwise she will have to work like a slave.

10. If a pregnant woman dreams of a pond, it means she will have a daughter. On the other hand, if she dreams of a 'Jhari' or waterfall she gets a son.

MOTHER'S LULLABY

The mothers usually sing the following lullaby (translated) to their babies:

"Hush ye, hush ye, little pet ye,
Hush ye, hush ye, do not fret ye;
The Tibetans and Bhutanese shall not get ye"

This song has a reference to old history. In ancient times, the Lepchas were continuously attacked by Tibetan, Bhutanese etc. and every one was afraid of them, even the children took shelter under their mother's care on seeing a Bhutanese or a Tibetan. This song is an outcome of the above affairs.

ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF A FEW PLACES

Lepcha's notion about the origin of the name of a few places is as follows:

Darjeeling comes from the word Dorju (Dorjee is a title) ling (abode) i.e. abode of 'Dorjees'. 'Dorjee' also means God, hence, it is also termed as the abode of God.

'Kalimpong' comes from Kahaling (gathering) pong (place) i.e. place of gathering. It is believed that once Kalimpong was full of wild animals, trees etc.

'Kurseong' comes from a kind of flower known as Kursung which has four petals of white-yellow or redish yellow colour and it is very small in size. This flower grows abundantly in Kurseong even in these days and can also be found in Kalimpong and other places in this district.

'Sonada' comes from the words Sona (bears) and da (den). This place 'Sonada' is believed to have been a den of bears a long time ago. 'Sonada' is just about 8 miles from Darjeeling.

'Sindipong' comes from the word, Sindee (a kind of tree) and pong (place). It is believed that this place was once full of such trees.

CHAPTER 8

HEALTH, EDUCATION AND RECREATION

HEALTH

The health of the Lepchas in general is good, still they occasionally suffer from a number of diseases, most important of which are mentioned below : Malaria (Gang Dulat), Small Pox (Ram Dui), Influenza (Dolot), Cold (Chesne) Diarrhoea (Tabot Dot), Tuberculosis (Ninyson), Leprosy (Dum) etc. Incidence of Malaria is gradually decreasing but that of Tuberculosis and Leprosy on the other hand is increasing now-a-days.

A good number of Lepchas still believe that these diseases are mainly caused by the devils (Mungs) and whenever a serious disease occurs it is believed that the evil spirit or the devil has entered into the body, causing all these troubles. However, gradually they are becoming conscious about the scientific causes responsible for the diseases.

STEPS TAKEN TO RESTRICT THE DISEASES

The usual method applied by the Lepchas for curing the disease of a person is by means of herbal medicines which are prepared from herbal plants that grow in abundance in almost every village. But side by side, magico-religious rites are also performed for curing these diseases. The "Mon" (Priestess) and "Bonthing" (Priest) perform the magical rites to trace out the evil spirits responsible for the diseases and also make necessary arrangements for driving out the evil spirit from the body of the person affected.

Now-a-days a few enlightened Lepchas often consult trained doctors regarding diseases and also go to hospitals for proper scientific treatment. But the faith over modern medicine still does not play an important role in Lepcha life.

ROLE OF VILLAGE QUACKS AND TRAINED DOCTORS

The number of trained and qualified doctors among the Lepchas is practically nil but a number of village quacks are found among them who, it is said, can cure many serious diseases. They usually apply herbal medicines and believe that such medicines even can cure tuberculosis. They do not always avail of the opportunities of village health centres, but in serious cases a few among them consult the doctors of the health centres.

INFANT AND CHILD MORTALITY

A few cases of infant and child mortality are found among them and the main cause of such incidence is due to not availing of help from the trained doctors or nurses during delivery. The family members or other elderly women attend during delivery and no scientific method or aseptic precaution is applied for the same. However, the infant and child mortality rate does not exceed the average rate of the district. Tetanus is said to be one of the main causes of such deaths and these happen mainly due to using of crude, unclean implements for cutting umbilical cords.

To prevent infant deaths a magical rite is performed, that is, the shedded skin of a snake is tied round the neck or wrist by means of a thread.

MATERNAL MORTALITY

Though the rate of maternal mortality does not exceed the average rate of the district still a few cases occur in Lepcha society due mainly to the following reasons:

(a) lack of proper nursing.
(b) lack of nutritious food.
(c) poor economic condition (domestic and other work has to be done just after the birth of a baby).

ATTITUDE TOWARDS HEALTH AND CONNECTED PROBLEMS

A survey on the above topic was carried out among the villagers of Sindipong. A few words are mentioned here regarding the attitude in general of the Lepchas of this district, for which a number of Lepcha leaders were contacted, both Buddhists and Christians and of rural and urban sectors.

(a) Most of the Lepchas are indifferent to the problems of their health. They never give serious thoughts to this subject.

(b) They do not take seriously the problems of family planning. A few of them from the urban areas are aware of the facilities available to them in hospitals or Health Centres. The rural population is almost completely in the dark in this respect.

(c) The Lepchas, in general, never practise circumcision. They are not aware of any method for prevention of child birth or abortion.

(d) They have no idea of the optimum size of their family and they cannot express any opinion as to whether a small or a big family would be preferable for them.

(e) Very few of the Lepchas from rural areas visit Health Centres, nor doctors visit their houses in spite of urgent calls. It is said that the doctors hesitate to go to attend in their houses because of the bad communication and strenuous journey involved. The people near urban areas try to attend the Health Centres. Buddhist and animist Lepchas still have faith in their traditional magico-religious rites in connection with diseases (already described) but the Christians are more enlightened and as such are more inclined towards the scientific treatments.

EDUCATION

The level of literacy among the Lepchas is very low and a great majority of the adult males and females are illiterate. Christian Lepchas in general are more educated than Buddhist and animist Lepchas. For spreading modern education among them rapidly a number of free primary schools have been started in almost every village.

Table 28 shows the figures of students of different scheduled tribe communities in secondary and post-secondary stages of Darjeeling district, which will give an idea about the present-day trend of the spread of education among the tribals of this district and also the position of the Lepchas.

The table gives the number of students of different Scheduled tribe communities at the two stages viz. secondary and post-secondary. It may be mentioned here that the 'Bhutia' consists of Bhutia, Yolmo, Sherpa and Tibetans. It is found from the table that the Lepcha students have been increasing from year to year, although the actual number of school going students falls far below the expected number. However, the proportion of expected number to actual number shows that the Bhutias (>0.5), Lepchas (>0.3), Kherias (0.2 and rose to 0.6 in 60-61) and Meches (0.1 and rose to 0.4 in '59-60 and '60-61) are the highest in Darjeeling district. Since the expected number of of Kheria (10) and Mech (20) are very few in number the analysis on them has not been dealt here. It may be concluded that some progress in education has been noticed among the Bhutia and Lepcha students in this district. These students of Lepcha community come more from Christian than Buddhist families. But in post-secondary stage, the Lepcha students are very few in number and the number again decreases from year to year. Higher education has not yet spread among them.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Recreational activities may be defined as the activities generally performed by a person during his leisure period for relaxation. Recreational activities are important in the life of a person and these are also an index of the health, vitality and culture of a community. As such an analysis of the recreational activities of the Lepchas has been done to assess the trend and functional value of the same on their life.

The Lepchas, in old days, had no well-planned recreational activities. Their social customs used to consume a major part of their leisure time and being by nature lazy they used to kill time gossipping. They were, of course, accustomed to playing flute; and racing and jumping were habitual games to them. Sometimes they also indulged in wrestling. Their main seasonal recreational activities traditionally were fishing and hunting. They often indulge in merry making without any planned way and often with drinking excessive "Chee", a home-brewn liquor.

In modern times, they are developing systematic and planned recreational sports. The children are often found to be playing foot-ball, basket ball etc. Swiming is looked on as a good sport. Sometimes they are noticed practising sports like racing or jumping. They are also found to take part in wrestling. Their seasonal recreational activites of fishing and hunting continue as before. The Lepchas are passive participants in many recreational activities during their leisure period. Cinama-going habit is increasing now-a-days. Table 27 gives a list of the recreational activities of the Lepchas.

Women generally are passive participants in the recreational activities. It is needless to say that gossippings consume major portion of their leisure period. Christian Lepchas participate in a large number in recreational games but Buddhist Lepchas are more absorbed in religious activities and in gossiping.

There is practically no reading habit among Buddhist Lepchas; clubs and libraries are very few in the Lepcha concentrated villages.

Table 27

Recreational activities and time of participation

Details of Recreational activities	*Participate by*	*Period of Participation*
I. Common recreational activities mostly participated.		
(a) Football	Children	4 P.M. to 6 P.M.
(b) Basket ball	Do.	Do.
(c) Racing & Jumping	Men & Children	Occasionally
(d) Wrestling.	Do.	rarely.
II. Seasonal recreational activities.		
(a) Fishing	Men & Children	(i) after harvesting (ii) during rainy season.
(b) Hunting	Men	after harvesting.
III. Activities in which they are passive participants.		
(a) Cinema	Men & Women	5 P.M. to 12 P.M.
(b) Football	Men & Children	4 P.M. to 6 P.M.
(c) Basket ball	Do.	Do.
(d) Wrestling.	Do.	Do.
(e) Drama, dance etc.	Do.	5 P.M. to 9 P.M. (as and when organised)

The analysis of the above facts shows that clubs and libraries have practically no influence on their cultural life. In fact this stands out as a glaring drawback in their progress. The reason is more economical than social. Of course proper encouragement is necessary to make them conscious in this respect.

Table 28

Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Students in Darjeeling District During 1957-'58 to 1960-'61.

Name of the Tribe	Expected number of school going students in Secondary stage	Actual number of students in secondary stage 1957-1958 No.	%	1958-1959 No.	%	1959-1960 No.	%	1960-1961 No.	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Santal	313	14	1.15	17	1.30	14	1.03	12	0.82
2. Oraon	1549	92	7.53	143	10.92	191	14.01	223	15.26
3. Munda	518	13	1.06	24	1.83	37	2.72	33	2.26
4. Kheria	10	2	0.16	3	0.23	6	0.44	2	0.14
5. Bhutia	1298	724	59.25	732	55.92	703	51.58	754	51.61
6. Garo	—	1	0.08	1	0.08	4	0.29	5	0.34
7. Lepcha	1185	372	30.44	382	29.18	397	29.13	421	28.82
8. Mahali	59	2	0.16	2	0.15	—	—	—	—
9. Mech	20	2	0.17	3	0.24	8	0.59	8	0.55
10. Hajang	—	—	—	2	0.15	1	0.07	1	0.06
11. Kora	3	—	—	—	—	1	0.07	—	—
12. Nagesia	37	—	—	—	—	1	0.07	2	0.14
TOTAL	4992	1222	100.00	1309	100.00	1363	100.00	1461	100.00

Table 28 (Contd.)

Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Students in Darjeeling District During 1957-'58 to 1960-'61.

Name of the Tribe	Actual number of students in Post-Secondary stage (estimated)								Proportion of student actually attended to expected number of students in secondary stage.			
	1957-1958		1958-1959		1959-1960		1960-1961		57-58	58-59	59-60	60-61
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
1	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Santal	Not available		—	—	—	—	—	—	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.04
2. Oraon		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.06	0.09	0.12	0.14
3. Munda		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.06
4. Kheria		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.20	0.30	0.60	0.20
5. Bhutia		,,	67	72.04	59	68.60	48	76.19	0.56	0.56	0.54	0.58
6. Garo		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
7. Lepcha		,,	22	23.66	24	27·91	15	23.81	0.31	0.32	0.34	0.35
8. Mahali		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.03	0.03	—	—
9. Mech		,,	4	4.30	3	3.49	—	—	0.10	0.15	0.40	0.40
10. Hajang		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.33	—
11. Kora		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.03	0.05
12. Nagesia		,,	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		..	93	100.00	86	100.00	63	100.00	0.24	0.26	0.27	0.29

CHAPTER 9

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Lepchas are very truthful and peace-loving people and theft, robbery, murder, rape etc. are very rarely heard of among them. Their petty disputes are amicably settled through traditional *panchayets* or "Panchas" as termed by the people. Every one abides by its decision though it has no legal authority. In case of a serious quarrel or offence they often have to go to the law court. They are very sincere and honest, never they try to make false statement even on a point of losing the case.

In their society, elderly persons are generally chosen as members of the Panchayet. They respect an uneducated old man more than an educated young man and hence the Panchayet is largely composed of old men.

In the past, the Panchayet used to impose heavy fines and award severe punishment to the person who dared to go against the society's norm. The village headman (Tassa or Patnyom i.e., Mondol) used to collect the land revenue, who even used to fix the land revenue in consultation with the Panchayet. Revenue was usually paid from the farm products.

Now-a-days a new type of Panchayet has come into existence and is constituted according to the rules and regulations passed by the house of representative of the country. The

Panchayet is not formed for any single community but is based on a regional basis.

There are now ten nominated Mondals (Patnyoms) among Lepchas, who are acting as headmen in a few localities. They always try to solve the inter-personal or inter-family conflicts of the people so that they can lead a peaceful and happy life. Their names are given below:

	Name	*Locality*
1.	D. T. Tamsang	Bong.
2.	S. T. Sada	Kalimpong.
3.	R. Dorji	Kashyon.
4.	Pasong Tamsang	Paykong.
5.	O. Kabo	Nimbok.
6.	Chhiring Kabo	Pamling.
7.	Azang S. Karthak	Kankibong.
8.	Dadur	Samthur.
9.	Daba Tshering Sambu	Tode Tangta.
10	Prubhu Singh Samboo	Loley.

These Mondals may be termed as representatives of the district administrator and they often play the part of a mediator between the Government and the community.

CHAPTER 10

DYNAMICS OF THE SOCIETY

It is intended, in this chapter, to briefly analyse the significant aspects of the dynamics of the society as found in operation in the Lepcha community. This community has gone through various phases of change for which a number of exogenous forces with an internal commotion is responsible. At first it is desirable to detect these forces of change and to assess the opinions and attitudes of the people towards economic and social changes that are either being attempted through administrative actions of the government or are expected to come through general developmental programmes of the country. Before dealing with these in details, the forces which are exogenous in nature may be specified as follows:

(a) Bhutias, a comparatively advanced neighbouring community of the Lepchas have greatly influenced the culture of the Lepcha community.

(b) Christian Missionaries came to this part of the country and converted a good many of them to Chrirstianity. Buddhism, however, substantially retained its hold on the general mass to check further inroads of Christianity and a major portion of the Lepchas are now the followers of Buddhism. As has already been mentioned, the Lepchas are now divided into three religious groups—Buddhists, Christians and a few Animists. Christian Lepchas have more or less been assimilated in that religious creed but some Buddhist Lepchas still adhere to many of their old customary beliefs (animistic) possibly with some change. The conflict of these two major religious groups of Lepchas often results in creating a gulf within the community due to changes in social, religious and cultural traits of the Lepchas.

(c) Economic factor plays a dominant role, as has already been mentioned that the Lepchas are very poor.

(d) One of the most important factors that brought about a change in the institution of marriage is the socio-economic problem which is mainly responsible for bringing this change. Lepcha girls are very beautiful looking. Comaratively rich communities like the Nepalis etc. entice these Lepcha girls who usually marry them because of the factors mentioned above. Moreover, many, of the Lepchas' traditional rites and customs are very expensive and the changing socio-economic factor of the present day forced them to change and adjust the intricate structure and duration of these customs.

(e) Darjeeling has become a cosmopolitan district and its multi-ethnic cultural pattern is gradually changing the traditional outlook of the Lepchas.

(f) Today perhaps the most important factor is the development of recent political trends of this district.

IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION

The impact is mainly two fold : (i) their culture has acclimatized the trend of modern or so-called advanced culture. Cinema may be named as one of the main factors responsible for this. The effect of Cinema is sharply noticeable in their socio-cultural behavioural pattern. The houses of the Lepchas (even the houses of the head Lamas), like those of other community people, are seen decorated with the pictures of cinema artists. The walls are bedecked with the photos and paper cutting pictures of cinama heroes and heroines together with that of religious saints. This shows how the people admire the heroes and how they are being reacted on by the cinemas. Now-a-days the pattern of their movement, and the manner of talking etc. show a great influence of cinema artists.

(ii) The culture and behaviour pattern of the foreigners and Indians of advanced societies residing in this region have also greatly influenced the Lepchas. Christian Lepchas whose number is not negligible have already started following the culture and habit of the advanced groups. Their dress, food, eating manner, mode of thinking etc. have also been moulded in that direction. The other non-christian Lepchas are also constantly being influenced by this, due to prestige value thereof in social life.

Now the question may arise, in what direction and to what extent has this impact influenced them? (i) An important change that took place due to the impact, is the change in some orthodox customs. For example, in ancient times a widow was bound to marry the younger brother of the deceased (husband) whatever might be his age. This custom is no longer in vogue. Credit system of marriage and heavy bride price by substantial property payment is not strictly observed to-day and some superstitious ideas and beliefs in connection with socio-religious practices are gradually melting away though the rate of change is not so marked.

(ii) The Lepchas are now-a-days becoming individualistic minded, that is, they try to think in terms of their own well-being which they never thought of seriously in the past. Modern politics is also playing an important role in their way of thinking.

(iii) Due to this impact, now-a-days they have imbibed some bad traits too. In the past they were very honest, amiable and very pleasant companions. But now a few dishonest and self-interested people can be found among them.

(iv) Food habit has changed to some extent. They are now consuming vegetables more than before. They take more cooked food than before.

(v) The Lepchas were never business-minded in the past and were even unaccustomed to the business terms, tacties, manners etc. Now a few of them can be seen to have taken to business.

(vi) The Lepchas are now becoming conscious about modern education (in which they are very backward), modern medical treatment and knowledge and modern training facilities in different technological aspects.

(vii) Folk songs and folk lores are gradually losing hold on Lepcha life and culture and are dwindling away day by day. In the past these people knew a good number of folk tales and folk songs but now only a few among them remember the same. This is mainly due to new value orientation among them.

(viii) Traditional arts and crafts, which used to play a dominant role in the past, are vanishing day by day. It may so happen that after a few decades their proficiency in this line would be heard of as a legend and outsiders curious about their arts and crafts would have to satisfy themselves by paying a visit to the museum. To-day many of the crafts go in the name of 'Lepcha handicraft' though they are prepared by artists of other communities and are sophisticated with modern taste. Mural paintings are still found but the artists in this line are very few in number, because many of them were forced to leave their traditional profession due to the lack of scope and encouragement and hard economic pressure.

(ix) Their traditional dresses and ornaments are also going thorough changes and developments of modernised ideas are taking place.

(x) Now-a-days occasionally it is found that some businessmen exploit the simple people of this district by employing them as sellers of some false stones to purchasers who think that they are making a good bargain of real Darjeeling stones from these poor and simple tribals. This is also one of the reasons for the development of dishonesty in them.

OPINION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS VARIOUS WELFARE MEASURES

The term opinion is generally used in a wider sense than merely to cover the personal views. It has three functions,

(i) the extent of awareness of the welfare schemes is important to assess, especially in a country where education and modern media of mass communication have not spread enough to the tribal society, (ii) the subjective views about the schemes from the persons who are supposed to have been benefited by the same and this is also an indication of the nature of assessment of changes by the people, (iii) the extent of their personal involvements and participation in those welfare schemes is an indication of their willingness of acceptance or rejection of the schemes. With these ends in view, a discussion has been made below from field observations and also from casual collection of data.

KNOWLEDGE OF AWARENESS OF THE WELFARE SCHEMES

The first question that has been asked, is whether the people are sufficiently aware of the existing welfare schemes which have been implemented for their benefit. 50% of the sample population appear to be aware of the existence of the majority of the tribal welfare schemes. It is clearly visualised that the knowledge of awareness of change and development is closely related to the status and education of a person. Leaders may be said to be all aware, and educated people and the persons well connected with urban life are more conscious than uneducated and rural people with little or no connextion with urban life. It means that the modern media of mass communication (such as publicity etc.) have yet to play proper role in interior villages. This is important because the schemes cannot be expected to reap the full crop of utility and usefulness unless the people are sufficiently made aware of these and their needs and problems made known to the administrators.

OPINIONS

A number of questions have been asked in this connection. A majority of the people have expressed that their economic condition has either gone down or remained where it was during the last two successive plan periods. A fair number of them are of opinion that welfare schemes could not help to raise their economic status. The sites of the schemes chosen are in their opinion often in wrong places and the people want more of these schemes in suitable places to be decided after proper consultation with them and that there should be no direct contribution from them. It has been noticed that a tendency has developed in the people, of mistrust or indifference to the benefit of the welfare schemes. It is essential to make people feel interested in the schemes by means of various publicity measures at the very beginning of a scheme.

ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE

Attitude forms the basis of human behaviour and often it is conditioned emotionally and by past experiences. Psychological, social and economical factors are mainly responsible for the background of forming the attitudes.

A few questions were asked about the attitudes of the people towards income, employment, government etc. It is revealed that the people are eager to raise their cash income. Most agriculturists are seeking additional work for cash money to meet the cash expenditure of their family budget and a good many are eagerly looking round for full time employment. Government service is a lure to the Lepchas which the educated ones are eagerly seeking for.

EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND THOUGHTS

An attempt has been made to analyse the trend of people's ideas and thoughts in their day-to-day life and a probe made into the subjective role of the same in different levels of the village life. This type of analysis can not be exhaustive from a single survey and this survey was made chiefly to point out the facet and its present role in the village. Hence, a village (Sindipong) has been taken as a unit of study and a few main points have been analysed below :

HAMLETS AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE VILLAGE

There are five hamlets in this village and except one hamlet (of Lepchas) all are multi-ethnic hamlets. The four hamlets are highly concentrated with Nepalis, and a few Sikkimese Bhutias and other community people are scattered here and there.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HAMLET, VILLAGE ETC.

All the grown-up people of a hamlet know the name of their village, but a good number of them are not certain about the number of hamlets of their village. Most adult people are aware of the ethnic composition of the particular hamlet, but a fair number of them are not sure of the same in the village. Almost all adult people know the names of the head of the families of their respective hamlets, but a few know the same of other hamlets of the village.

FEELINGS

Ethnic feeling is not so strong as that of hamlet feeling but village feeling is in no way a noticable aspect. Religious tie has been noticed to be a remarkable trait of all the people of this village.

ASSEMBLAGE

The Buddhist people gather on all festive occasions in Buddhist monastery (Mani Gumpha) of the village. This monastery plays a very prominent role in the socio-cultural life of the people of this village *vis-a-vis* of individual hamlets. Although this monastery is of Lepchas, all the people (even non-Lepchas) of this religious creed (Buddhism) assemble here at least five times a year, twice in March-April, twice in August-September and once in June, to celebrate the Gumpha festivals. People of all ethnic groups, but of same religious creed, gather and exchange their ideas and discuss their problems etc. on these occasions. Apart from the above, there is no other remarkable assembly even within the same hamlet.

PARTICIPATION

In all the rites of passage, (such as birth, name-giving, marriage, death and funeral), the people of a particular hamlet participate, irrespective of their ethnic differences. That is, there exists a strong hamlet feeling and ethnic feeling comes next (i.e. they invite a few of their own community people from other hamelts), but village feeling is not noticable on these occasions. It is needless to say that kinship feeling is strong everywhere. In case of funeral processions, generally the relatives accompany the corpse but other people of the same religious group may also accompany.

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

In case of religious festivals different communities have their respective festivals. There exists no festival nor fair in the village or hamlet level, but the "Gumpha" festivals are held on village or extra village (i.e. including villages other than that village) level, description of which has already been given. The magico-religious rites are performed by the Lepchas on community-hamlet level, where the people of other communities or of other hamlets do not usually participate.

CO-OPERATION

Monetary co-operation is generally extended by the same ethnic people, hamlet feeling comes next.

DAY-TO-DAY MEETING

There is no arrangement of day-to-day meeting of the people. The people of the same hamlet may meet by chance or on necessity.

WEEKLY MARKET OR 'HAT'

'Hat' acts as a weekly meeting place of the people. Here they exchange ideas or communicate thoughts and messages. Generally the adult male members are accustomed to visit the 'Hat'.

RANGE OF MOVEMENT

In their day-to-day life, the people usually move upto their working places which are within two to three miles from the village. Weekly 'hat' is also about two miles from the village. Women move only within their own hamlets or to their cultivable land which is not far from their houses. There is no seasonal variation in their movement except those on special occasions, necessitated by any special function in their relatives' house, that may be even at a distance of 6 or 7 miles. When possible, long distances are covered by motor-bus etc., otherwise they are more habituated to walking. The majority of the people are not accustomed to seasonal migration or any other type of long-time migration unless poverty presses very hard. The majority of Lepchas hesitate to go outside their own sub-division even if enough work is offered to them, unlike other people like the Nepali Community who would readily go to distant places if sufficient returns are assured. There is no other prominent aspect of difference between Lepchas and other groups of people except in regard to migration. As a matter of fact very few Lepchas of this village (Sindipong) have gone outside Kalimpong.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUTSIDE WORLD

In order to assess the people's knowledge of outside world, the following few questions were put to them :

(a) Do you know who is, (i) Jawaharlal Nehru, (ii) Mahatma Gandhi and (iii) Dr. B. C. Roy?

(b) Do you know where is, (i) Kalimpong, (ii) Sikkim, (iii) Darjeeling, (iv) Calcutta, (v) Delhi and (vi) Siliguri?

(c) What do you know about India's freedom movement? When India got independence?

(d) What is West Bengal, and India?

It was revealed from the analysis of the replies that, (i) most people do not know or heard the name of Nehru, Gandhiji, or Dr. B. C. Roy, (ii) just a few persons from Lepcha community have visited Sikkim, Darjeeling and Siliguri but Calcutta and Delhi were not visited by anybody except by two persons; Kalimpong has been visited by majority of the people. No one from other communities has visited Sikkim. Majority of the people heard the name of Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Sikkim and Siliguri, a fair number have heard the name of Calcutta and Delhi but a very few can tell the importance of these two places, (iii) very few of the people know about Indian freedom movement or when India got independence, (iv) very few of the people have fair ideas about west Bengal and Delhi and a good number of them know that they belong to West Bengal but the idea of India or Indian is lacking in them.

It is not proposed to draw any conclusion from the above facts except that education and mass communication have not penetrated sufficiently into the village level of this hilly tract, even though this village (Sindipong) is only about two miles from urban area (Kalimpong).

DISSEMINATION OF NEW IDEAS

Regarding discussion on four levels, village, hamlet, community and family, the following question has been tested:

Which person or agency should be approached in order to introduce new ideas so that it may spread into the entire (i) family, (ii) Hamlet, (iii) village, or (iv) community?

Firstly, it has been found that the newer ideas get entry into the community through the elderly people. Head of the family or his father is the usual source in this respect. This is true for all communities of the village.

Secondly, on hamlet basis it has practically no function but the Lamas act central figures in respect of one or more villages. This is practically true of the people of Buddhist community. It may safely be said that innovation comes through the Lama in villages controlled by his Gumpha. The Lama knows many details of majority of the people (Buddhist Lepches) of his village as he has to attend all the socio-religious functions of the people and he even selects the name of a new born baby. The Lama also knows the clans of many of his community people. Thus even on community level, the Lama acts as midium of inculcating new ideas for the Buddhist Lepchas.

Thirdly, the non-Lepchas are usually guided by their leaders or Panchayets.

Fourthly, a few of the Lepcha leaders (viz. Mr. J. Rongeong, Secretary of the Lepcha Association, Mr. K. P. Tamsang, President of Lepcha Association etc.) play an important role as media of innovation among the Lepchas of this district. It has been found that the Lepchas of this village know about Mr. Rongeong much more than about others.

Lastly, it is essential to point out that the Lamas and the leaders of the Lepchas are the main media of innovation and they may be termed as the main mass communicators of the people. The attainment of a satisfactory degree of success from the welfare schemes would therefore largely depend on their co-operation and publicity work through them. Proper attention should therefore be devoted to train them accordingly.

ACCOUNTS OF LEPCHA PRIESTS:

TSHERING ONGCHHUK, A HEAD LAMA

He was born in 1899 and married in 1923. His maternal uncle was the Head Lama of 'Mani Gumpha', the oldest existing monastery of Lepchas of Kalimpong area (established in 1820) and after the death of his uncle (who was childless) he took the post of the Head Lama, a hereditary post, from 1930. He went to Gangtok (Sikkim) in that year to learn Lamaism and Tibetan script and language from a Tibetan school which is an essential qualification of the Lamas. He did not take any other course, nor he knows other languages except Lepcha (Rong) and a working knowledge of Nepali. His statement is given below:

"I am an "Yukmon" (Lama). I am used to waking up very early in the morning and after washing my face, I carry water in a pot from "Jhari" and pour it on seven bowls placed in front of Lord Buddha. I do it so that god will not be thirsty and after that I invoke god with the word ("Om Mani Padme-Hum chi") (Oh God! wake up) and then with lamp and *dhup* etc. I do *Arati* (welcome the God). The same thing is also done in the evening. This is my daily duty as a Lama. On ceremonial occasions I have to arrange the festivals in the "Gumpha", while the continuous prayers are carried on by other Lamas. I have to supervise everything. This is my sole responsibility. I do not smoke which is forbidden for a Lama. There is no other restriction on me except that I have to lead a quiet and ideal life. I cannot quarrel with others but I have to negotiate and arbitrate in village quarrels etc. I have visited Darjeeling, Siliguri and Gangtok but no other places. I know almost all the details of every household of my locality—their "Agit" (clan), birth day, marriage day etc. because I have to perform religious rites in connection with the function and to make their horoscopes etc. I have heard the name of Mr. Wangdi (Former Dy. Minister of Tribal Welfare, hailing from this district), Dr. B. C. Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, Harendra Mukherjee (Former Governor of West Bengal), Mr. Kaji (Tribal Welfare Officer of this district) and many notable persons. Many Government officials and Ministers have visited my 'Gumpha' and I found that they are very amiable and sympathetic. But should we not expect some improvement of this village—renovation of the Gumpha, construction of a village road, and establishment of a Library-cum-reading-room-cum-club ?

"The Lepchas are very poor and during my life-time I found many Buddhists being converted to Christianity. Those people were economically depressed with a heavy burden of debt etc., the Missionaries helped them and converted them to their religious creed. They are well looked after and are now educated and well-to-do, but we the Buddhist Lepchas do not know beyond primary education and have not seen anything beyond this little area. Who will show us light and when? Should we have to change our creed ?"

ADUR TSHERING LEPCHA, A "BONTHING"

The following statement of a Lepcha "Bonthing" will reveal the trend of his thoughts: "My father was a "Bonthing" and being his eldest son I assumed the prefession of "Bonthing", which is a hereditary one. I learnt the magico-religious rites from my father who before his death passed it on to me. If my father had died suddenly, having no time to pass on to me his secrets, I could not have become a Bonthing (that may be a reason why the number of "Mon" is becoming less and less among Lepchas). No, No, please dont' press me, I do not know any *mantras* or magic. Bonthingism is dying day by day. Of course it has got value and it has done many good things but people are losing their faith in it. Yes, I have done many good things. Oh No, there is no magic in it" (He won't disclose his secrets).

"I have to take part in child births, marriages, and funeral ceremonies together with the Lama. I know almost all the people of this village. I have not visited outside Kalimpong. I cannot remember any notable change of Kalimpong during my life-time".

CHAPTER 11

WELFARE ORGANISATIONS

Various welfare Organisations are now-a-days actively working among the tribals of Darjeeling distirct. The Christian Missionaries were the first to take up the welfare work amongst the Lepchas, and they converted a good many of the Lepchas into Christianity. They have raised the educational and economic standards of these people. Their role was to do welfare work among them by changing or assimilating them into a new orientation and a good many of the converted Lepchas thus could shed off most of their traditional beliefs and customs due to the process of new orientation. The result is that the distinctiveness of the characteristics of the people has been lost to a great extent but the aim of the present national Government is to integrate these people into the national democratic set-up, in such a way that they may continue their life without losing the distinctiveness of their culture.

So the welfare organisations need have a broad and impartial out-look, the only objective and interest being the upgrading of the standard of life of the people in all respects, so that the community as a whole enhances the prestige of the nation. The welfare organisation that emerges from within the community may have a greater effect on the people than some other outside agencies, especially those with a special bias for any particular section of this extermely backward community. The Lepchas have themselves such a welfare organisation which works for the uplift of the community as a whole. The name of the organisation is "Lepcha Association", relevant information about which is given below:

1. Name and Address: The Lepcha Association, "La Roche", Kutchery Road, P.O. Darjeeling.

2. Branch: The Lepcha Association, C/o Arts & Crafts., Kalimpong, Darjeeling.

3. Date of Registration and Number:—27th March, 1950 Registered number 18,713/909 of 1949/50.

4. Total number of members in the organisation: 105.

5. Basis of membership: Any Lepcha can be a member with a monthly subscription of 50 naya paise only.

6. Sources of finance: (a) Grants from the Government of West Bengal, Tribal Welfare Department.

(b) Subscription and donation from the members.

7. Aims and objectives of the organisation:

(a) To promote, foster and develop cultural activities, fine arts and literatures and for that purpose to arrange for lectures, exhibitions, musical and social gatherings.

(b) To protect and improve civil rights and liberties and to extend social and economic facilities among Lepchas.

(c) To improve and extend educational, social and cultural activities among Lepchas and for these purposes to establish and maintain schools.

(d) To organise and start clubs, free reading rooms and libraries.

(e) To render relief to its members or deserving poor people of this community out of its funds or other means.

(f) To open, establish and maintain branches of the association for carrying out the objectives of the Association.

(g) To help or to subscribe for membership to other organisations whose aims and objectives are similar to it.

(h) To print, publish and circulate journals etc.

(i) To settle small disputes among the Lepchas.

(j) To make representation on behalf of the Lepcha community to the Government or other authorities.

8. Activities entrusted by the Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal:

(a) To run a weaving school and one Library.

(b) To organise folk dances.

9. Area of operation of the Tribal Welfare Schemes: Darjeeling town and surrounding bustees viz. Dabaipani, Takdah Lepcha bustee, Singritam, Manedara, Pokhribung, Pooloongdung, Mirik, Sitoong etc.

10. Location of the centre of operation of Tribal Welfare Schemes: "La Roche", Kutchery Road, Darjeeling.

11. Number of active workers engaged in connection with the Tribal Welfare Schemes: 14 only.

12. Brief statement of any activities other than that entrusted by the Tribal Welfare Department:

(a) Medical relief has been given to poor patients by purchasing medicines.

(b) Social gatherings were often arranged.

(c) The Association spent a large sum of money out of its fund for defraying expenses in connection with burial and funeral of indigent Lepchas in the town and in the nearby bustees.

(d) Donation made to local school building and also to West Bengal Flood Relief Fund.

(e) Opened a Milk Distributing Centre in the Association itself and the Committee have been distributing free milk to 150 children and nursing mothers in the area where the Association is situated.

(f) To uphold the Lepcha language, the association has been running a language school. Reading of Lepcha books and newspapers in Lepcha script are encouraged.

13. Published Literature: There is a monthly magazine in Lepcha script. One First Primer and one Second Primer in Lepcha language have also been published.

This magazine is not running regularly now-a-days, because of shortage of funds and lack of organisational capacities. Very few people are proficient in Lepcha language and the influence of other languages is so much on them that they give little attention to their magazine.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that a few Lepchas in some Lepcha dominated villages carry on systematic social welfare work among them. They have formed co-operative societies for saving the poor Lepchas from the clutches of money lenders etc. There are also a few co-operative grain-golas, creamery societies etc. which need proper attention of the administrator. The Government is extending helping hands and it is hoped that the people's endeavour will meet with success. Welfare societies of the Lepchas, it is hoped, will be able to set up a bright example to other community people.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The foregoing chapters present a fairly comprehensive report of the findings of the study of different aspects of the life of the Lepchas of Darjeeling district.

This study was carried on mainly for obtaining a general profile of the socio-economic and cultural life of the Lepchas though other aspects have not been ignored.

The data have been presented in such a way as to be helpful for different cetegories of personnel working for and among these people. This is expected to remove a long-felt need for a suitable hand book as no systematic and scientific data were available regarding the Lepchas of this area and for the same reason certain information of a technical nature collected during this study has not been incorporated in this report but will be dealt with suitably later on.

As has already been mentioned, more stress has been laid on the descriptive aspect though the analytical side has not been altogether side-tracked. The subject deserves further prolonged study of different aspects, both academic as well as applied and this monographic study is expected to provide scope and materials for such work.

Further work on specific applied aspects about these people would be taken up by the Institute in future.

This monograph is the first published work of this kind in West Bengal. Similar type of monographic studies on different scheduled tribe communities will be published by the Institute particularly for tribal communities about whom no systematic and scientific up-to-date data are available. It is expected that this series of monographic studies would serve as helpful guides for academic as well as applied workers in the field.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Banerjee, S. K., 1962	Marriage pattern Among Lepcha Community: Past and Present, Modern Review, February, 1962, Calcutta.
Blandford, W. T., 1871	Journey through Sikkim, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XI, Part II.
Chakravarty, N. R. 1959	Kunchenjungher Chelley Meye, Krishnagar.
Gorer, G., 1938	Himalayan Village, London.
Dalton, Col. E. T., 1872	Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta.
Gubernatis, 1872	Zoological Mythology, London.
J. A. S. B., 1881	The Bon Religion, Calcutta.
Kilgour, R., 1902	Life of Jesus Christ in Lepcha, Darjeeling.
Mainwaring, Col. G. B., 1876	A Grammar of Rong (Lepcha) Language, Calcutta.
Mitra, A., 1953	Census of West Bengal: The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, Calcutta.
Mitra, A.. 1954	Census of West Bengal: District Hand Book of Darjeeling, Calcutta.
Oxford, 1908	Imperial Gazetteer of India, New Edition, Vol. XXII.

Morris, J., 1938	Living with Lepchas, London.
Risley, H., 1891	Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. 2, Calcutta.
Ronaldshay, 1924	The Land of the Thunderbold, London.
Stocks, C. De Beauvoir 1926	Folk-lore and Customs of the Lap-chas of Sikkim, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Article No. 23, New Series, Vol. XXI, Calcutta.
Waddel, L. A. 1890	Among the Himalayas, London.
Waddel, L. A. 1894	Lamaism in Sikkim, Gazetteer of Sikkim, Calcutta.
Ware Edgar, J., 1874	Report on a visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontiers in 1873, Calcutta.

3001

APPRECIATIONS

The Culcural Research Institute gratefully acknowledges the receipt of encouraging appreciations from various authorities and Institutions about the book, "Impact of Industrialisation on the life of the tribals of West-Bengal", which was published as the first volume of the special series of publications from the Institute.

It is hoped that this second publication of this series, "The Lepchas of Darjeeling District", would also be able to win similar type of appreciations from its readers.

While feeling encouraged by these kind remarks and appreciations the Institute realises the added responsibility for maintaining a high standard for its future publications, which the Institute will try its best to achieve.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Cultural Research Institute has pleasure to announce that two issues (No. 1 and No. 2) of Vol. I of the Bulletins of the Institute have already been published and No. 3 is awaiting publication shortly.

This present publication 'The Lepchas of Darjeeling District' is the second of the special series, the first one having been published some months ago.

It is expected that the Institute will be able to bring out some more publications of this series in near future (e. g. The Rabhas of West Bengal ; The Impact of Tea Industry on the Rabhas of West-Bengal ; The Impact of Tea Industry on the life of the tribals of West-Bengal ; The Oraons of Sunderban area ; Socio-medical study of the tribals etc.).